

Attractions

MAGAZINE



AttractionsMagazine.com

Volume 9, Issue 2

Spring 2016

Behind the Scenes

It All Starts with a Story

What's New at La Nouba

Top 10 Ways to Live It Up
at the Theme Parks

Magic Kingdom's
New Skipper Canteen

Q&A with a SeaWorld
Dolphin Trainer

Flower & Garden Versus Food & Wine

Last Splash for Wet 'n Wild

How the World's
First Waterpark was Started

Two Parks!
Orlando & Kissimmee



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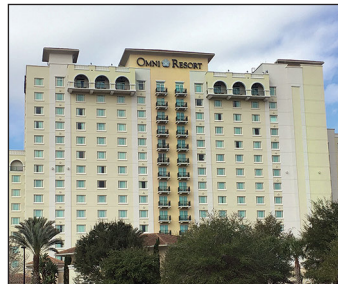
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ON THE COVER

Even some of the topiaries at the Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival have stories behind them. Ranger Mickey is new this year to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Parks Service. On the other side of this planter, you'll find topiary Chip & Dale, who have stolen Ranger Mickey's sandwich out of his bag.



WHAT'S NEW ON **ATTRACTIONS**MAGAZINE.com

In addition to the stories and photos in this magazine, check our website regularly for even more, plus many videos. Stay up-to-date with all the latest theme park and attraction news through our weekly video shows, our free iPhone/iPad app and our free e-mail newsletter.

KYLO REN INVADÉS HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

PHOTO BY SUBLIME IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY



Walt Disney World continues to make additions to their Star Wars offerings at Disney's Hollywood Studios. The latest comes in the menacing form of Kylo Ren, the villain from "Star Wars: The Force Awakens". Guests can meet him inside Star Wars Launch Bay and see him appear in Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple. Videos of both experiences can be found on our YouTube channel.

GOODBYE NICK HOTEL

PHOTOS BY SUBLIME IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY



On April 18, the Nickelodeon Suites Resort is changing to the Holiday Inn Resort Orlando Suites — Waterpark. Our Feb. 25 episode of "Orlando Attractions Magazine: The Show" is hosted from the resort and takes a look back at its 10 years in Orlando. You can also visit our YouTube channel to see all of our videos from the Nick Hotel over the years.



COASTER HARD HAT TOURS



PHOTO BY SIDNEY LEE

SeaWorld Orlando and Busch Gardens Tampa are in the midst of building new roller coasters, Mako and Cobra's Curse respectively. We brought you the first look at the ride vehicles for both coasters, as well as details and a construction tour for Cobra's Curse. Check our YouTube channel and the Feb. 18, 2016 episode of The Show.



RECAP OF HARRY POTTER CELEBRATION



The third annual A Celebration of Harry Potter took place at Universal Orlando from Jan. 29 to 31. With the passing of Alan Rickman, who portrayed Severus Snape in the Harry Potter film series, several tributes were made in his honor during the event from the attending celebrities and fans. Visit our blog to see the tributes, as well as an event recap and a taste testing of every kind of Butterbeer available in the Wizarding World.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE NOW

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on our past issues

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website



If you missed any of these issues, don't worry!
They're all still available at AttractionsMagazine.com.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to Attractions Magazine! You probably noticed our new logo on the cover. But you may not have noticed we dropped "Orlando" from our title. But don't worry, not much is changing. Along with the new logo, we've modernized the look of our pages and sections, but everything you love about the magazine is still here.

Even though we're now just "Attractions Magazine", we are still based in Orlando and it will still be our focus. We've always had our "Out of the Loop" section, and we still do, but you may also see a few stories from the major theme parks outside of Florida such as Disneyland and Universal Studios Hollywood. But Orlando theme park and attraction news will still dominate the magazine. More than ever, Orlando is the theme park capitol of the world, and we remain committed to fully covering it.

The shortened name also better represents our coverage outside of the magazine: on our weekly show, on our YouTube channel, on our website and on social media. Check them out for even more coverage of fun things to do all around the world.

Have Fun,
Matt Roseboom, Editor/Publisher

ATTRACTIONS MAGAZINE STAFF

Editor and Publisher

Matt Roseboom

Writers

**Kimberly Button, Andy Guinigundo, Banks Lee,
Barb Nefer, Ben Rebstock, Matt Roseboom,
Quinn Roseboom, Simon Veness, Susan Veness**

Photographer

Matt Roseboom

Art & Design

**AllPhaseGraphics.com, John Green,
Pat Lewis, Christopher Titchenal**

Proofreader

Scott Otis

Editorial Assistants

Banks Lee, Jackie Roseboom, Quinn Roseboom

CONTACT INFORMATION

Attractions Magazine

7512 Dr. Phillips Blvd. STE 50-612, Orlando FL 32819

Web: attractionsmagazine.com

Phone: 407-741-3200

E-mail: info@attractionsmagazine.com

Twitter: twitter.com/attractions

Facebook: facebook.com/attractionsmagazine

YouTube: youtube.com/attractionsmagazine

Snapchat: AttractionsMag

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FEEDBACK

Favorite Fan Photos and Stories.

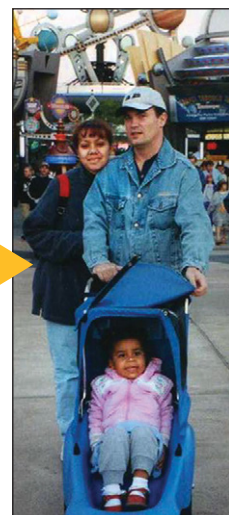


This is the first photo of my first visit to "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter" at Universal's Islands of Adventure. I have always been an enormous Harry Potter fan since I was 6. I was also a large fan of Orlando's theme parks for a good few years as we went every year for our holidays. Islands of Adventure had always been my family's favorite park. So it only made it all the better one day, when I came home from school in 2007 and my mum handed me a newspaper with a story of a new Harry Potter theme park coming to Orlando. I then followed every construction update website on the park for the next three years. Every brick, every wall, even a new lick of paint! Seeing it being built in person every year made it even more exciting. Finally, in 2010, the big day came. I hardly slept that night, due to jet lag partially, but mostly from excitement to finally go to the park. My sisters, cousin and myself all jumped over the line into Hogsmeade for the first time together. That's where we were greeted by the Hogwarts Express conductor at Hogsmeade Station. I couldn't believe how amazing everything looked and how incredible the ride (Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey) was. Overall, it gave me a much deeper appreciation of all the amazing hard work and technical "wizardry" that talented individuals put into Orlando's theme parks for our enjoyment.

**Rory Melly
Kilwinning, U.K.**

This is a picture of me as a baby with my parents at Magic Kingdom in 2001. I love all the Disney parks because I have so many fond memories there. My mom

and future dad met at Cirque du Soleil in Downtown Disney and this was one of their first few dates. It's fun to go back and look at old pictures and see how our family grew and grew every time we went back. Disney has been such a huge part of my life, I wouldn't have my current family if it wasn't for these parks. They're very special to me.



Cynthia Marie Bencz

This photo of Mickey and I was taken at one of my favorite Disney theme parks, Animal Kingdom. This was actually the very first time I had a photo taken with Mickey, and it was at a very special time in my life. I had just graduated school for medical assistant, and had also just found out I had passed my test to become a registered medical assistant for the State of Florida. Because of this accomplishment, my husband treated me to a whole week at Walt Disney World. We had a wonderful time and celebrated to the fullest. It is quite evident from the great big smile on my face, wouldn't you agree? (Mickey was very happy for me too. Not only for my accomplishment, but in telling him it was my first time I was having a photo taken with him!)



Kathleen Seaman

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This is a photo of my wife Mary, daughter Emma, son Alex and I at the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World. It was the first time my kids have ever

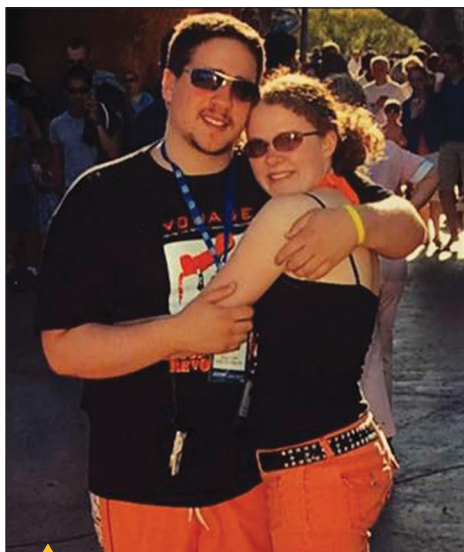
been there. My daughter's reactions to everything was the highlight of the trip. I will never forget the look of amazement on her face when she walked up to meet Mickey.

David Lowe
St. Louis, Mo.



This is Blackpool Pleasure Beach in Blackpool, Lancashire in the U.K. and it's my childhood park and the first park I ever visited. I have so many memories riding The Big One and Grand National and meeting so many great people there over the years. The picture was taken last year on one of the few days Blackpool gets any good warm weather.

John Charnick
Rugby, Warwickshire, U.K.



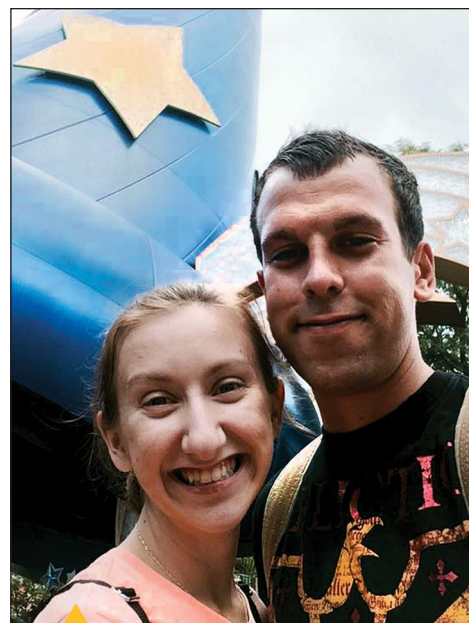
This is a photo of my husband, James, and myself at one of our favorite parks, Islands of Adventure, taken in March 2006. This is one of my favorite photos of us because this photo was taken just a couple months into our relationship and ironically, above our heads are the words "the adventure begins." Little did we know, three years later, we would become engaged in front of the Jaws ride at our other favorite park, Universal Studios. Universal Orlando is where the adventure began and will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Jillian Scafide
Blackwood, N.J.



This was my son's first visit to Orlando, Fla. and Epcot. It was taken in World Showcase Epcot (France Pavilion, I think) in November 2007. He also got a kiss from Aurora and Snow White the same day, leaving him with lipstick kisses all over his face.

Chris Lester
Nottingham, U.K.



Always remembering the hat.

Adam S. Bellay

WRITE TO US!

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We want your letters and photos!

If you have any comments about the magazine, questions about traveling to Orlando or fun stories or photos to share, simply e-mail us at info@attractionsmagazine.com.



THEN & NOW

Meeting Dreamfinder and Figment

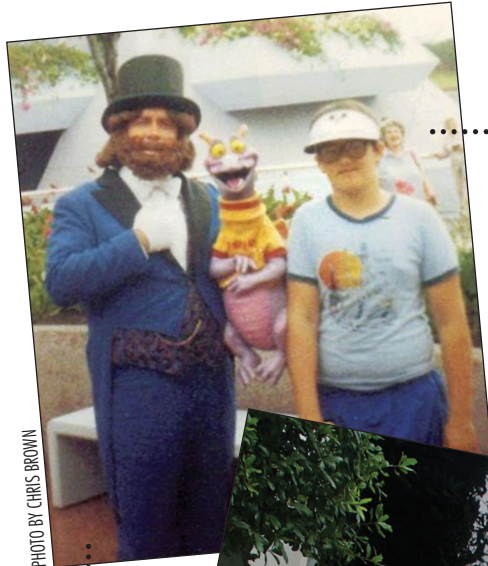


PHOTO BY CHRIS BROWN

When Epcot first opened, the Journey Into Imagination With Figment ride was called Journey Into Imagination and it not only featured Figment, but his friend named the Dreamfinder. He was not only in the ride, but also made appearances outside the ride, holding Figment. Later, the ride was renamed Journey Into Your Imagination. Dreamfinder was removed completely and Figment's role was reduced to a couple of cameos. At that time, guests couldn't meet Dreamfinder or Figment. Later, the ride was updated once again to what it is today and Figment was added back into the attraction. For a while, guests could meet a very tall Figment in a room outside the attraction. To many fans' dismay, at this time, they can't meet Dreamfinder or Figment at Epcot. But you never know when they may appear again. Both made a short surprise appearance at the D23 Expo in 2013.



A VISUAL JOURNEY THAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE THE WALT DISNEY WORLD

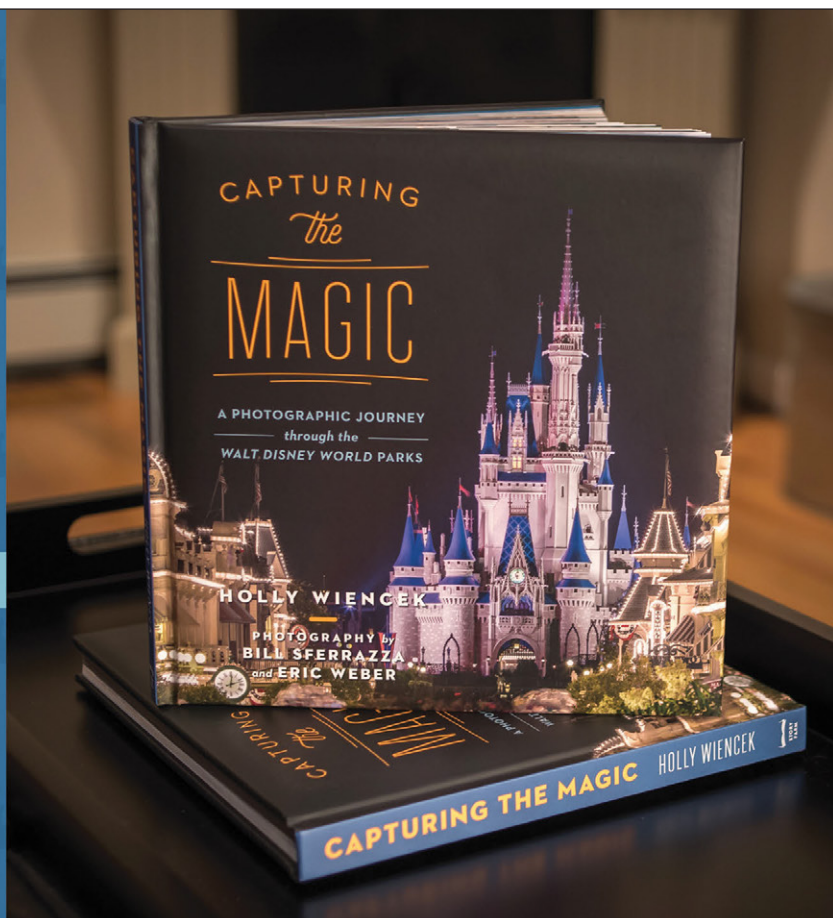
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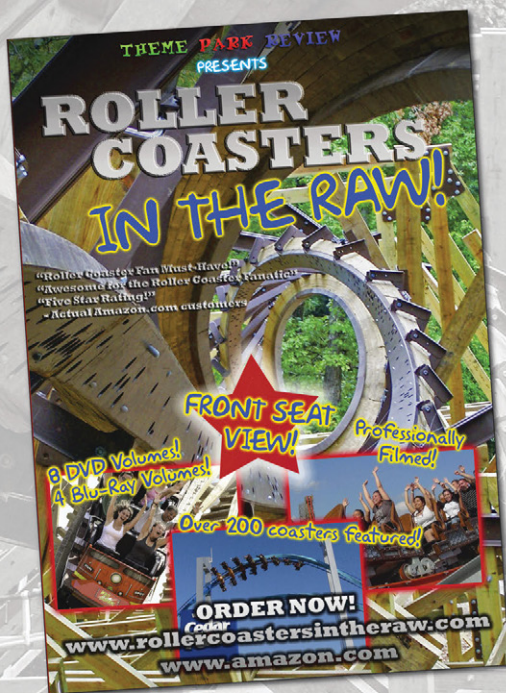
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VACATION PLANNER

We've chosen our favorite upcoming events to spotlight. You don't want to miss them on your next trip to Orlando.

By Banks Lee

EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FLOWER & GARDEN FESTIVAL

Location: Epcot

Dates: Now through May 30

Cost: Included with theme park admission

The popular spring festival at Walt Disney World, known for its edibles, floral displays and topiary creations, expands from 75 to 90 days. Two new spring-inspired Outdoor Kitchens, three new Disney topiary characters and a musical play garden will debut this year and the Garden Rocks Concert Series will set the beat with familiar tunes each weekend.



VIVA LA MÚSICA

Location: SeaWorld Orlando

Dates: Every Saturday from April 16 through May 14

Cost: Included with theme park admission

Viva la Música is a Latin music and food festival for the entire family. Guests enjoy concerts by popular Hispanic artists and bands and authentic Latin flavors specially prepared by SeaWorld's very own executive chef, Hector Colon.

SPOOKY EMPIRE RETRO

Location: Wyndham Orlando Resort

Dates: April 1 through 3

Cost: Varies from \$30 to \$65

Meet and mingle with your favorite horror movie and TV stars, buy collectibles, see new and up and coming films as well as old favorites, take part in one of the largest Zombie Walks ever, get a tattoo and more.



BUSCH GARDENS FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

Location: Busch Gardens Tampa

Dates: Every Saturday and Sunday through April 24

Cost: Included with theme park admission

The annual festival returns featuring new culinary creations, including a menu of more than 35 dishes designed specifically for the event; an expanded line up of more than 120 wines, craft brews and cocktails; and performances from musical artists including Andy Grammer, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Meat Loaf, The All-American Rejects and more.



MEGACon

Location: Orange County Convention Center

Dates: May 26 through 29

Cost: Varies from \$20 to \$100

This year's convention expands to four days and features celebrities such as Stan Lee, Kevin Smith, Adam West, John Cusack, and Doctor Who companions Billie Piper, Freema Agyeman and Jenna Coleman, and others. The show floor will also include pop culture collectibles and you can take part in costume contests, panels and meet-ups.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Walt Disney World Resort

disneyworld.com (407) 939-6244

SeaWorld Orlando

seaworld.com/orlando (800) 327-2424

Busch Gardens Tampa

buschgardens.com/bgt (888) 800-5447

Legoland Florida

florida.legoland.com (877) 350-5346

Universal Orlando Resort

universalorlando.com (407) 363-8000

All events and dates are subject to change. Please check with the proper organization before attending. Check our calendar section at AttractionsMagazine.com for up-to-date happenings in the Orlando area.



NEWS IN THE QUEUE

By Quinn Roseboom

CLOSING FOR STAR WARS AND TOY STORY LANDS

LOCATION: Disney's Hollywood Studios



A number of attractions have closed and are closing soon to make room for the new Star Wars and Toy Story Lands coming to the park. Already closed are the Cars and Phineas and Ferb meets. Starting April 2, Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show, Honey I Shrunk the Kids Movie Set Adventure, Studio Catering Co., Monsters, Inc. meet and some merchandise shops will also be closing. No opening date has been set for the two new lands yet.

WHAT'S A GANACHERY?

LOCATION: Disney Springs



Looking for a sweet treat in Disney Springs? Located in The Landing, the story of The Ganachery goes that the Spring's old pharmacy closed and became a chocolate shop where you can "indulge your cravings for sophisticated chocolates and ganache while interacting with expert chocolatiers." The store sells many different handmade chocolate products, including Disney character-themed chocolate lollipops.



DINNER, A SHOW, AND A PARTY!

LOCATION: International Drive



Mango's Tropical Cafe brings the party feel of South Beach to Central Florida with food, drinks, live music, dancing and dinner shows. The large building features several bars, indoor and outdoor dining on both floors and a private Voodoo Lounge with different music and vibe from the main stage show.

TIME TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTED ...

LOCATION: Disney's Hollywood Studios

Kylo Ren from "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" is now appearing at the park. At Star Wars Launch Bay, Darth Vader's meet and greet has been replaced with an encounter with Kylo on the bridge of his First Order Star Destroyer, and across the park, in Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple, Kylo Ren makes an appearance, replacing Darth Maul. Kylo isn't the only Star Wars addition coming to Hollywood Studios though! Starting April 4, a new live stage show called Star Wars: a Galaxy Far Far Away will celebrate moments from the saga each day at the Center Stage area near The Great Movie Ride. Also, at various times each day, Captain Phasma will lead a squad of First Order Stormtroopers as they march in formation from Launch Bay to the Center Stage in a demonstration of the First Order's strength. Coming this summer will be the next generation of the current Star Wars-inspired fireworks show. Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular will light up the sky each night with fireworks, lasers, light projections and other special effects combined with Star Wars music, characters and scenes from throughout the saga.



PHOTO BY SUBLIME IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY



CONCEPT ART BY DISNEY

SHUTTERS & SUGARPLUMS

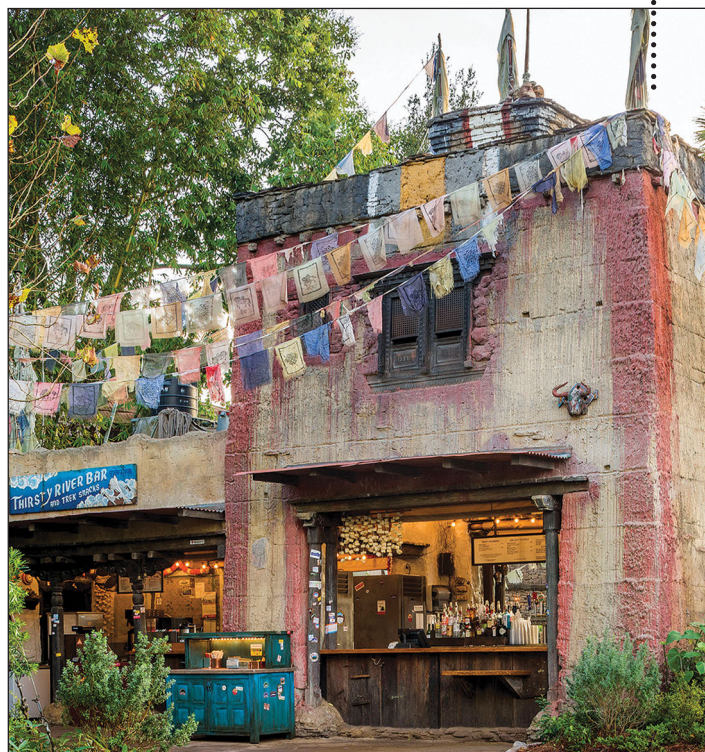
LOCATION: Universal Studios Florida



Shutterbutton's Photography Studio in Diagon Alley has moved into a space on the main stretch of the Alley, leaving its old space in Carkitt Market open for a new candy store. Sugarplum's Sweet Shop sells everything from Cauldron Cakes to Shock-O-Choc and No Melt Ice Cream to Butterbeer Fudge. Both shops are open daily.

RENOVATING FOR RIVERS OF LIGHT

LOCATION: Disney's Animal Kingdom



Guests trekking through Asia at Disney's Animal Kingdom park can now enjoy the new Thirsty River Bar and Trek Snacks near the entrance to Expedition Everest. The building it occupies used to house the FastPass kiosks for Everest, which became obsolete with the addition of the FastPass+ system. The Trek Snacks menu varies throughout the day, with pastries in the morning and more substantial bites such as sushi and sandwiches in the afternoon and evening. The Thirsty River Bar features themed specialty cocktails and non-alcoholic drinks for climbers returning from their ascent and future viewers of the Rivers of Light nighttime show, as it is located right next to a major seating area for the show, which begins April 22.

RIP CSI

LOCATION: International Drive



CSI: The Experience, which opened in 2012, is now closed. Guests were able to play the role of crime scene investigators and solve multiple mysteries. It is unknown what will happen to the space currently, but check our website for any further updates.

SLIME-BE-GONE

LOCATION: Nickelodeon Suites Resort



Starting April 18, the Nickelodeon Suites Resort will be no more. The resort will be renamed Holiday Inn Resort Orlando Suites — Waterpark. The rooms, Lagoon Pool and Café are being rebuilt as part of a \$30 million renovation. The Nickelodeon time capsule, which was first buried at Universal Studios Florida in 1992, then moved to the Nick Hotel, will be moved to Nickelodeon Studios, which is currently under construction in Burbank, Calif.

PEAK PRICING

LOCATION: Walt Disney World Resort

2016 CALENDAR

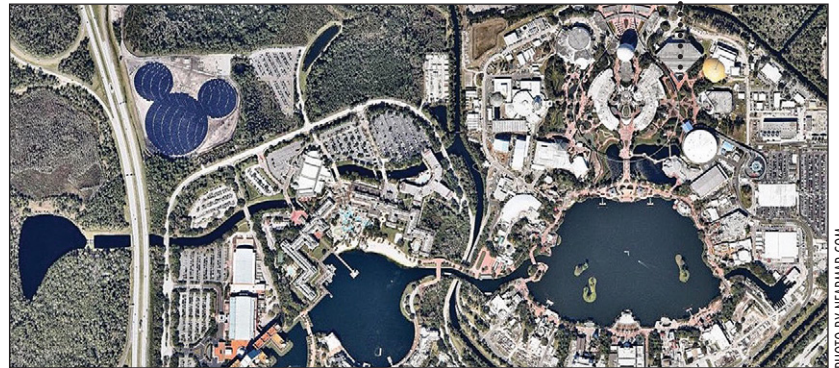
Walt Disney World Resort

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Starting in late February, Disney began a system in which single-day ticket prices vary based on which day you visit. Dates are divided into one of three “seasons”: Value, Regular or Peak. Peak dates will see a one-day Magic Kingdom ticket being around \$124, and the other three parks \$114. During Regular dates, Magic Kingdom will be \$110 and the other three \$102, and Value dates will remain the same as before, \$105 at Magic Kingdom and \$97 at the other three parks. Multi-day tickets at Walt Disney World will not be part of the tiered pricing, but did raise in price. Annual Pass prices were not affected.

MOUSE POWERED

LOCATION: Walt Disney World Resort



You'll need to get high up in the air to see the newest Hidden Mickey. With help from Duke Energy and Reedy Creek Improvement District, Disney developed a five-megawatt solar energy project. The solar farm, made of 48,000 solar panels arranged in the shape of a “not-so-hidden-Mickey,” will help power Disney World.



IN THE CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT

LOCATION: Disney's Hollywood Studios

Two new meet and greet opportunities are starting soon. The Celebrity Spotlight will be near Echo Lake and allow guests to meet Olaf from Frozen. The second new meet and greet location is called Mickey and Minnie Starring in Red Carpet Dreams and will be situated in the old audition building for the American Idol Experience. This is where guests will meet Sorcerer Mickey and Minnie dressed in her Tinseltown best.



A NEW UNIVERSAL PARK?

LOCATION: 450 acres off Universal Boulevard



Universal Orlando recently purchased a 450-acre stretch of land near Universal Boulevard (adjacent to International Drive) from Sand Lake Road down to Rosen Shingle Creek Resort. But they haven't announced any plans for it. Could they be thinking of building a third theme park or another "branch" of CityWalk? Or both? Only time will tell.

FUN SPOT TO GET EVEN MORE HUGE!

LOCATION: Fun Spot America



RENDERING BY FUN SPOT AMERICA AND FALCON'S CREATIVE GROUP

Fun Spot America has announced a new long-range master plan for their Orlando park. The expansion will include a new waterpark, roller coaster and other major rides. The plan includes six new themes that will be applied across the entire park over the next five to 10 years. The theme of the newly remodeled park will be Americana: classic American past and present time periods. The first phase will start with the first of half of a new waterpark to be built on vacant land between Gator Spot and the front of the park. This area should open by next spring.

SAY HELLO KITTY

LOCATION: Universal Studios Florida

Located near the front of the park in the former Lucille Ball tribute space, a new Hello Kitty store marks its official retail debut at theme parks in North America. Inside guests will find specialty merchandise including stationery, home goods, apparel, accessories and collectibles. Special co-branded Hello Kitty

Universal park-exclusive products are expected to be available in the future. Some interactive experiences and a character meet are also expected to be added soon. Betty Boop and Universal-branded merchandise are also available in the space, with Hello Kitty only taking over the area Lucy was in.



A QUEST OF COSMIC PROPORTIONS

LOCATION: Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex

Cosmic Quest, a new interactive game, promises to immerse young guests in a variety of adventures while educating them about NASA's current and future space exploration endeavors. Robonaut, a replica of NASA's real R2 robot currently working aboard the ISS, serves as a virtual narrator and guide as trainees use their "astronaut badges" to interact with touch screens located throughout each of the exhibit areas. Cosmic Quest is \$24.95, in addition to the price of admission. All adventures are included in the price and are good for a year.



JUMP FOR JOY

LOCATION: Artegon Marketplace



METAL DETECTORS ADDED

LOCATION: Theme Parks and Water Parks

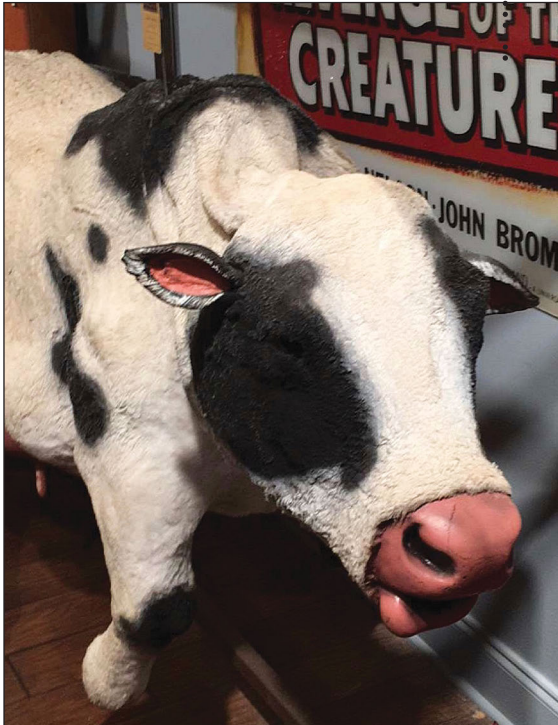


All of Orlando's theme parks have increased security and added metal detectors to scan guests entering the parks. Disney has also updated their park rules: Toy guns, including toy blasters and squirt guns, are no longer sold in the parks and are now prohibited from being brought into the parks; and no one older than 14 may wear a costume into Disney parks.

Sky Zone Indoor Trampoline Park is now open and offers open jump, a foam pit to jump into, volleyball, two basketball hoops, Ultimate Dodgeball and a SkyRobics class. The new park also offers birthday parties, corporate team building and field trips.

PROP SHOP POPPED UP

LOCATION: Universal Studios Florida



A new store called Williams of Hollywood Prop Shop recently opened in the park. The shop sells antiques, plus signs, costumes and other props that were used during special events, in closed attractions and at various locations around the resort. The store is located inside the former magic shop in the Beverly Hills area of the park. The magic shop in Islands of Adventure also closed earlier this year and currently houses a store featuring local art.

WHO BELIEVES IN DREAMS ANYMORE?

LOCATION: Magic Kingdom



An all-new stage show is coming to Magic Kingdom this summer, replacing the long-running "Dream Along with Mickey" show. "Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire" will take place daily on the Cinderella Castle Stage, where Mickey Mouse and his pals unite in a tale of friendship featuring songs and characters from "The Princess and the Frog," "Tangled" and "Frozen." The final day to see "Dream Along with Mickey," which has been running at the park for almost a decade, will be April 2.

WASTED AWAY AGAIN AT THE MARGARITAVILLE RESORT

LOCATION: Kissimmee

Jimmy Buffett's presence in Orlando will soon expand from a restaurant to a resort with the Margaritaville Resort, now under construction. It will include a hotel, vacation ownership and vacation homes. Features will include a FinCity arcade, St. Somewhere Spa, a planetarium, Son of a Sailor fishing school, paddle boarding and kayaking, shopping, restaurants and a lake with a beach. The construction site includes the former home of Splendid China, a theme park that was closed in 2003.



FROZEN FOREVER AFTER

LOCATION: Epcot



Construction continues in the Norway Pavilion, as it has for many months, and it feels like forever since Maelstrom closed and we found out it was being replaced by a Frozen Ever After ride. When it opens this summer (pushed back from spring), Queen Elsa will create a winter-in-summer day for the entire kingdom. While it doesn't feature any new songs, there are several new lyrics written for the ride. The Norway Pavilion is also being expanded with the "Royal Sommerhus," which will reflect the cultural arts and crafts of Norway, and allow guests to meet Elsa and Anna.



PHOTO FINDS

Orlando is always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.

An **opening night event** was held on Dec. 17, 2015 for **Star Wars: The Force Awakens**. The event started with a screening of the movie at Disney Springs, then continued past midnight at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Guests were able to **meet and see some rare characters**, and were the first to see the latest version of Symphony in the Stars: A Galactic Spectacular fireworks show.

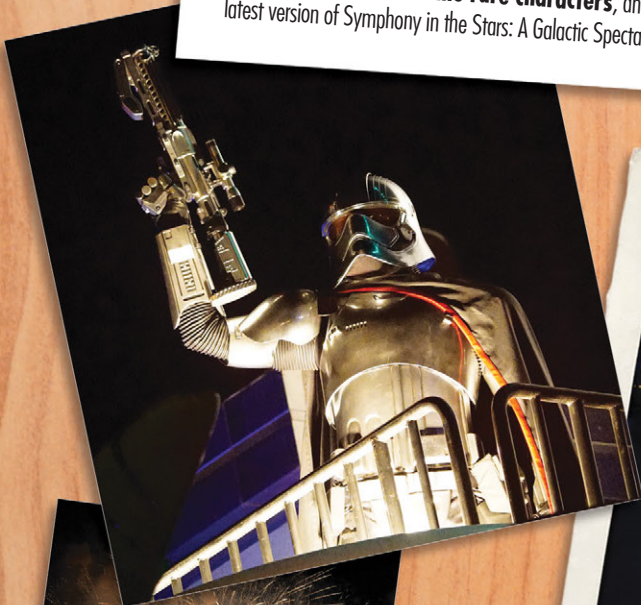
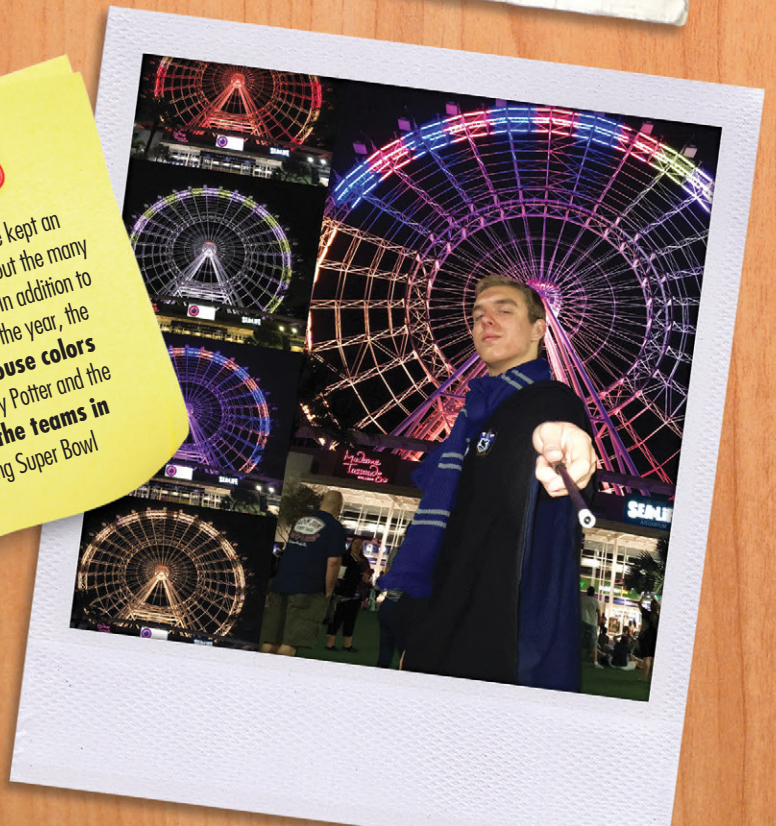
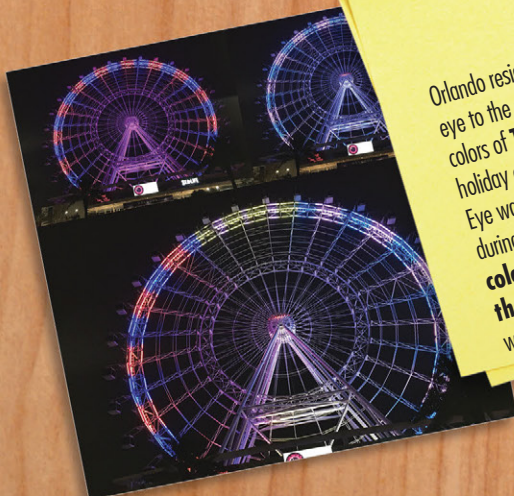


PHOTO BY SUBLIME IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Orlando residents and visitors have kept an eye to the sky at night to check out the many colors of **The Orlando Eye**. In addition to holiday colors certain times of the year, the Eye was **Harry Potter house colors** during A Celebration of Harry Potter and the colors **representing the teams in the Super Bowl** during Super Bowl weekend.



The third annual **A Celebration of Harry Potter** took place at Universal Orlando from Jan. 29 to 31. In addition to a few **tributes to actor Alan Rickman**, fans could also see some of the **stars from the films**, attend various panels and visit the expo hall with shopping, photo ops, film props and more.

PHOTO BY SUBLINE IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY



You never know which celebrities you'll see when you visit **Madame Tussauds Orlando**. Although some always remain, new **wax figures** are added and removed frequently.





VERSUS

We put attractions head-to-head.

By Banks Lee

Epcot International Festivals

With the 23rd annual International Flower & Garden Festival currently underway and the International Food & Wine Festival celebrating its 21st year this fall, let's take a look at both events and see which you should choose (if you have to).

FLOWER & GARDEN

VS.

FOOD & WINE

LENGTH



The Flower & Garden Festival has been extended this year from 75 days to 90, giving guests more time to enjoy the floral displays, topiaries and foods.



The Food & Wine Festival will also be extended later this year, from 53 days to 62, offering more chances to eat and drink your way around the World.

DISPLAYS

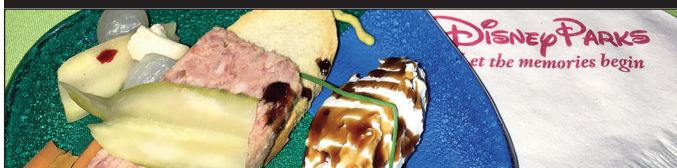


Flower & Garden has to be one of the most picturesque events at Walt Disney World. There's something to look at around almost every corner, from gardens to topiaries and even butterflies.

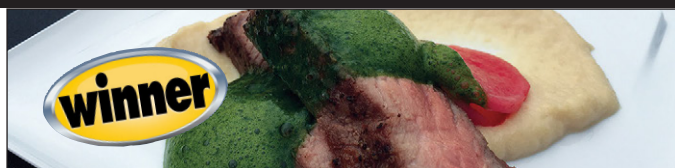


Though the displays around Food & Wine aren't as picturesque as Flower & Garden, the use of the festival theme and graphics throughout the park is still fun to see.

FOOD & BEVERAGE



Flower & Garden hasn't been known for specialty food options in the past, but over the last few years, more and more Outdoor Kitchens have popped up.



You can't have a Food & Wine Festival without the food and wine. Last year, the festival expanded to Future World for the first time, marking more than 30 different food and wine marketplaces.

CONCERTS



Artists such as Starship, The Guess Who and Village People perform at the Garden Rocks Concert Series with hits spanning several decades. However, concerts only take place Friday through Sunday during the festival.



With a concert happening every day during the festival, the Eat to the Beat Concert Series features a wide selection of artists from the oldies to today including David Cook, Smash Mouth and Air Supply.

SEMINARS

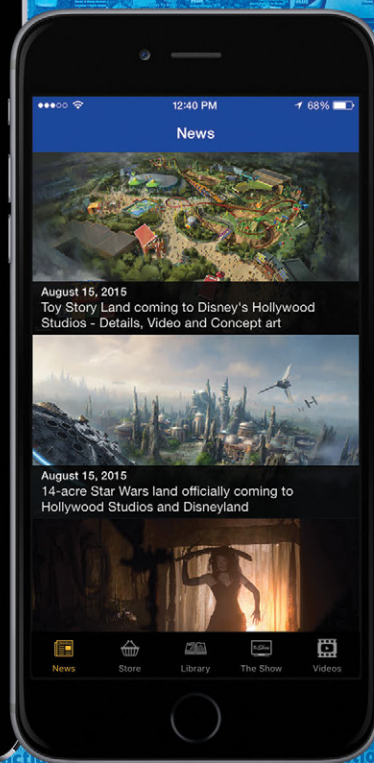


Inside Flower & Garden's Festival Center, guests can take part in gardening seminars to create a take-home souvenir or get tips from experts on a broad range of topics.



Seminars inside the Festival Center during Food & Wine include mixology, beverage and culinary demonstrations. Some big names have been known to stop by to host a seminar, including beer brewers and musical brothers, Hanson.

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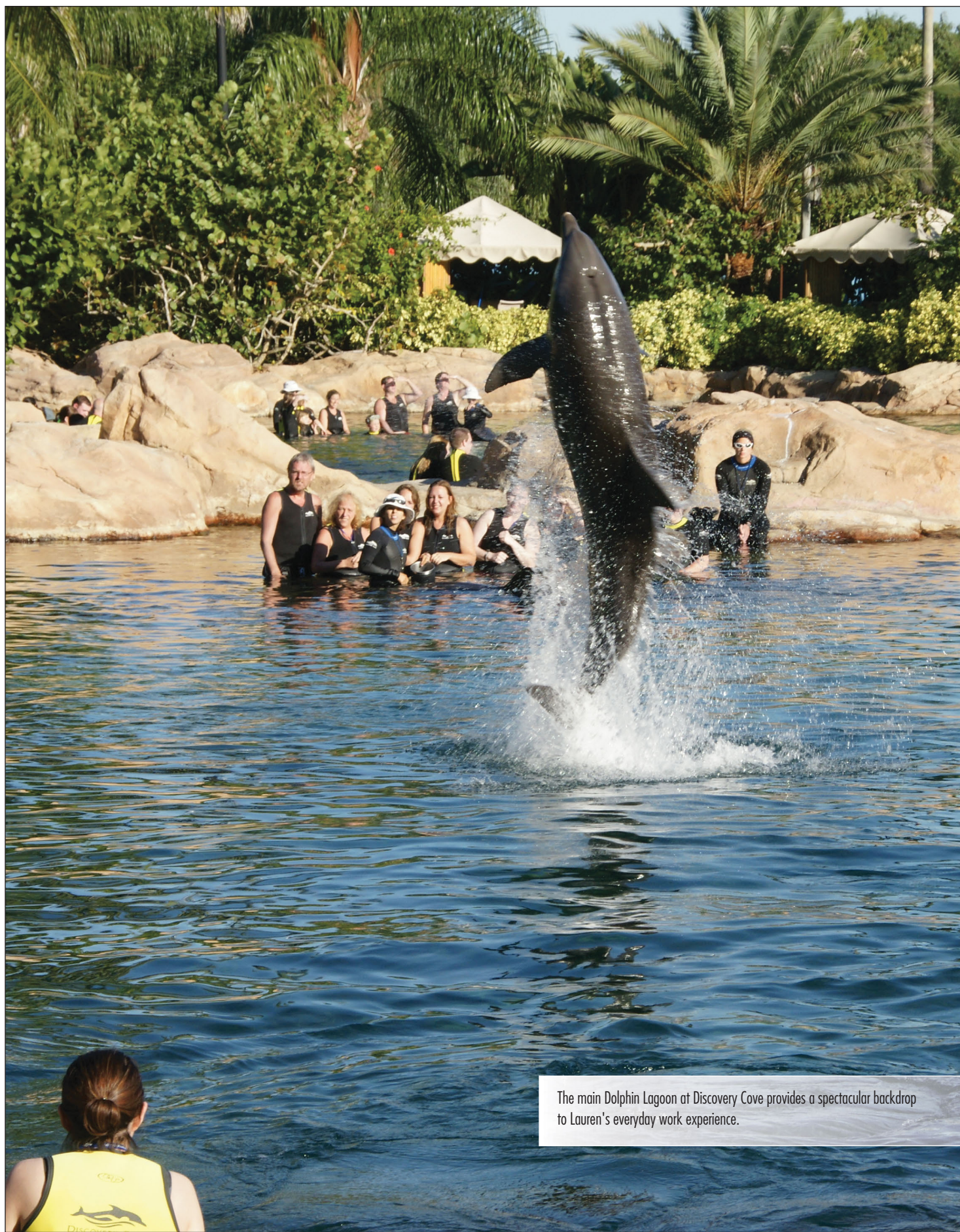


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The main Dolphin Lagoon at Discovery Cove provides a spectacular backdrop to Lauren's everyday work experience.

SeaWorld Dolphin Trainer

Lauren Taft talks about her dedication to the animals

Lauren Taft began her career with SeaWorld 10 years ago, starting in education before becoming an animal trainer at Discovery Cove, where she is now a Senior One Trainer. A graduate of Davidson College in North Carolina, she received her diploma on a Sunday, then drove straight down to Florida and started working on Monday, and has been with the company ever since. With the dolphin lagoon as our backdrop, Lauren shared her story with us.

Did you visit the SeaWorld parks when you were younger and did they inspire you to get into this career?

Where I lived we didn't have a SeaWorld park. When I lived on the West Coast, there was a small aquarium by San Francisco. On the East Coast, I visited a small aquarium in Connecticut. My route was a little bit different to most girls who want to get into this field. They say our bodies are 60 percent water, but my life was 60 percent water, because I was a huge swimmer. I loved our pets, but I never saw myself in this career. It wasn't something I grew up with a passion for, but since I started working for this company, it's become my whole life. A lot of our employees knew what they wanted to do when they grew up, but for me, it was like I was destined to be in this career because I was an excellent swimmer and



I took a lot of theater classes. I like talking to people and working with kids, so my patience and my joy for watching children learn translated to the animals.

When you were a child, what did you think you'd be when you grew up?

I thought I'd be a teacher or pediatrician. If kids are sick I can help them feel better. If they want to learn something, I can help teach them. So in a way, I get to do that, even though those aren't my titles.

What was your main inspiration to work with animals?

When I first started with SeaWorld, I was working with the campers (kids at summer camp) who came into the park

every week, and I really enjoyed using the animals to educate them. There is only so much you can do in a classroom, and I noticed a completely different reaction when kids would get to see a show or touch a stingray or feed a sea lion. I had more of a connection and more to give them when I had something that captivated their attention the way a huge animal can. It made me want to learn more about the animals, and teach myself and our guests about what we can do to take better care of them.

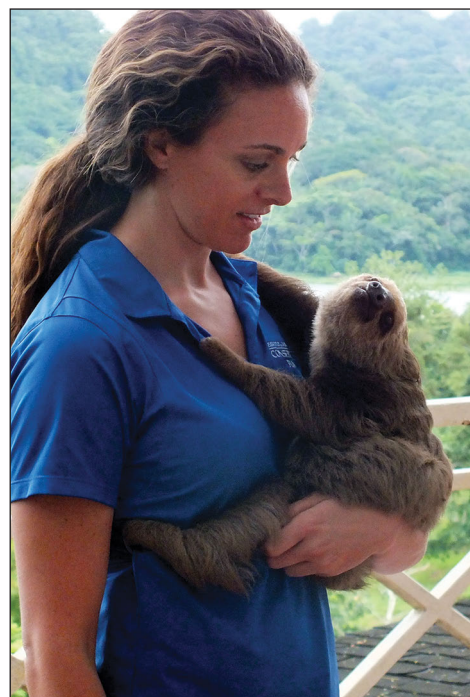
What is a typical day for a trainer at Discovery Cove?

We have no typical day, to be honest. We're here every hour of every day. There may be some days when I'm here at 4

a.m. and my primary goal is to prepare all the restaurant-quality diets we're feeding to our animals for the day, or there may be days when I don't come in until 4 p.m. and I'm watching the animals overnight. If I hear any unusual respiration, or if I see some whitewater going on in one of the lagoons, I want to make sure I keep an eye on it and it calms down after a little while. There is no typical day, but that's part of what I love about this career. It keeps things different for the animals and for the trainers. We work on weekends and holidays, but we know these animals come before our birthday or a holiday. In my role now, I'm here progressing our newer animals to do interactions and progressing some of our newer trainers to get comfortable with the animals in the water.

Has there been an experience that's been the most memorable for you?

I brought my mom in for her 60th birthday with six of her girlfriends, and they're from up north where we don't have anything like this. The person I love most in the world is my mom, so it was really special to have her come in and meet the animals I love. We do a lot of packages for celebrations, where the animal will bring a buoy for the guest of honor, and a dolphin brought her a buoy



During her visit to Panama with the Panamerican Conservation Association, Lauren got to help with the rescue and rehabilitation of several rainforest sloths.

that read, "Happy Birthday Mom. I love you" on it. She was so touched and I was so touched; we both cried. It was probably my best day at work because it brought in the people I love outside of work with the animals I love inside of work. That was the highlight of my career, getting to share these animals with the people I love.

Has there been a funny moment in your relationship with the animals?

I often have the sloths out, and I can't tell you how many times guests have come up to me and asked if it's a baby dolphin. It's funny, but it's also because so many people have never seen these animals before. I get to see them every day, but there are people from parts of the world, and even parts of this country, that have never seen a sloth or a dolphin. They know our park has dolphins, and I'm at reception holding an animal, so it must be a dolphin. It's such a good message for us; we sometimes assume too much. There are people who are never going to have an experience like this or learn about these animals until they come to our park. I get 30 minutes with people from all over the world, and I want to make sure they're having a good time, but that they're also being educated. If somebody doesn't know the difference between a terrestrial and an aquatic animal, that's OK. It's our responsibility to educate them.

Has there been a particular dolphin that you've had the strongest relationship with?

That would be like picking a favorite child. We divide our animals into three different social pods, and we do the same with our trainers. I work with a dozen dolphins every day in our Seahorse social group, but when I first started working here, I had one dolphin that I worked with before I could build up my animal repertoire. There were animals I started with when I'd never touched a dolphin before, and there are some that were born while I was here. There are others that I'm with, teaching new trainers to get comfortable in the water with a 400-pound animal, and there are others that teach new trainers how to be a good trainer. Some of these dolphins have been here longer than their trainers have been alive. I appreciate them all for different reasons, so to pick one would be impossible. All of

their personalities are different and I love them all for different reasons.

Do you ever participate with wildlife specialists doing research?

Our Conservation Fund donates about a million dollars annually to various projects around the world, and there's a group called the Panamerican Conservation Association who have applied for various grants. This year we decided to send an employee out there to share best practices and common knowledge about the animals. I work with sloths, anteaters and armadillos, which are Panamanian species animals, so I got to spend two weeks in Panama. Dolphins and sloths are both really popular right now, so they're great education tools. If we want to talk about marine conservation, dolphins are great ambassadors. If we want to talk about rainforest conservation, sloths are excellent ambassadors. I helped with some of their rescue and rehabilitation efforts and got to do my first sloth release with a female who was healthy and ready to be released, so we were able to release her back into the rainforest. It was a rewarding experience for me. So many people have told me they've been to Costa Rica and Panama and they say, "The guide told us, 'there's a sloth way up there', but we couldn't see it." Then we bring our sloths in and they get to touch them and have pictures taken with them. It's a completely different experience.

If you were able to spend a day at Discovery Cove as a guest, which part of the park, besides the dolphin pool, would you explore?

I think I would stay away from the dolphin lagoon because I'm so familiar with it and never really get to go to the other areas of the park. They have been doing some training with the fish in the Grand Reef, and they have trained a hogfish to follow hand targets during our SeaVenture program, so if they want pictures with the fish, they can place it perfectly in the photo. It's great because people are like, "What was that fish in there? I want to know more about it." I've never seen these training sessions, so I think if I had a day where I could come in and play, I'd want to see what they're doing. It sounds fantastic, and very educational. People sometimes have misconceptions



After a full day at Discovery Cove and the dolphin interaction program, Lauren hopes people take their love for these animals and apply it to their own lives.

about certain animals and think, “These animals are so smart, they should or should not do whatever”, but fish, on the other hand, no. That’s not really fair. Fish don’t need to eat every day, so they’re more challenging to train than a mammal. Mammals have to eat every day. You have an easier time training when you have a way to reward them. Fish and stingrays can go for days without eating. I’d be curious to know what they’re doing with their training.

What do you hope guests take away from a day in Discovery Cove?

There are so many little kids, especially little girls, that come up to me and say they want to take a dolphin home, or they loved it so much, and I say, “OK, what are you going to do next?” I’d love to have

them go home and tell their friends, or tell their teacher, and see how they can take their love for these animals and apply it to their own life. Maybe it’s a career for them, or maybe it’s just something they’ll be passionate about. I tell them if they love these animals, then help protect them in their natural environment. I hope the connection they make with the animals inspires them to be better stewards for our environment. That can be something as small as taking shorter showers, or recycling, or organizing a community rally and doing a fundraiser. It can be as small as making yourself better or as large as making your community better. If everyone who left this park was inspired to make a difference in themselves, I think we could make a huge contribution to our planet.

What was the best piece of advice you were given in relation to your job or in caring for animals?

They always come first. As long as we keep the animals in our focus, we can’t get burdened with or frustrated by extraneous things going on in our environment. The goal is to provide these animals with world-class, quality care. If that means I have to get up at 2 a.m., so be it. If a dolphin is going into labor and I just flew home from my brother’s graduation, OK, I’m not going to bed, I’m going into work to make sure the labor is successful. I’m so privileged that I’m able to devote my life to these animals, and I know there are a lot of little girls coming up who are ready to take over in this career. But I’m far from done yet.



While Discovery Cove is a beautiful environment to work in, Lauren said, “There is no typical working day for me, but that’s part of what I love about this career”.

By Skipper Ben Rebstock

Top 10 Places To Live It Up at Disney World and Universal Orlando

In the past, we've given you tips and ideas on how to get the most out of your trips to Orlando and stretch your dollar as far as it can go. But sometimes, you want to let loose and live it up, and there are plenty of great options at

Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando that will help you take your vacation to the luxury level. Here are the top 10 places to spend money and take your next vacation up a notch.

10

RIDE THE AMPHICARS AT THE BOATHOUSE

One of the best new additions to the Disney Springs area has, without a doubt, been The Boathouse. It's an upscale restaurant that you can spend a pretty penny on dining inside — but it's outside where you can really drop the big bucks. For only \$125, up to three people can take a ride around Village Lake in a vintage Amphicar. Your tour starts on land before your car pulls into the water for a 20-minute "drive" around the lake in style.



DINE AT A CELEBRITY CHEF RESTAURANT

There are now nearly as many celebrity chef-run restaurants around Orlando as there are E-Ticket rides in the parks! From Morimoto Asia and two Wolfgang Puck locations at Disney Springs to two Emeril's locations at Universal Orlando to Todd English's Bluezoo at the Dolphin Resort (just to name a few), you can't go far without bumping into a dining location run by some of your favorite chefs. All of these locations will cost you a little more than a regular restaurant, but the experience is absolutely worth it.

9



8

SHOP AT ART OF DISNEY

Sometimes, a pair of Mickey ears just aren't enough to remember your trip to Disney World.

No, sometimes you need a large painting of your favorite ride, a two-foot-tall sculpture of The Beast or an actual animation cel from a classic animated movie. These are some of the items you can find at various Art of Disney stores around Walt Disney World. It's the only place in the world where you can spend thousands of dollars and charge it all to your MagicBand, where credit card charges are as make-believe as Pixie Dust and talking snowmen.



TAKE A FIREWORKS CRUISE ON GRAND 1 YACHT

7

Sure, anyone can find a spot on Main Street to watch the Wishes fireworks show, but why stand in a crowd when you can stand out from the crowd on a yacht. The Grand 1 sets sail from Disney's Grand Floridian and takes you out on Seven Seas Lagoon to watch Wishes in style. The 45-foot Sea Ray yacht holds up to 18 guests and comes with a captain, deckhand and, if you order food and drinks, a butler. A one-hour rental costs more than a season pass to Walt Disney World, putting this cruise on the highest level of elite experiences.



PHOTO BY DISNEY

6

DINE AT VICTORIA & ALBERT'S

It's the restaurant that you've always heard of, but never dined at (probably because you didn't pack your nicest suit or dress with you to take to a theme park), but Victoria & Albert's at Disney's Grand Floridian continues to be the pinnacle of fine dining in Orlando. The AAA Five Diamond restaurant is as classy as it gets. You will be served six courses over a two-hour culinary experience. An evening in the main dining room will run you \$150 per person, or if you are lucky enough to land a spot at the super-exclusive Chef's Table, the price jumps to \$250 per person, and that's before you order any wine. Enjoy!

5

STAY IN A BUNGALOW AT POLYNESIAN

One of the newest resort options at Walt Disney World is also one of the priciest, which means it's the perfect place to spend a little extra cash. The Bungalows at Disney's Polynesian Village Resort put you right out on the waters of Seven Seas Lagoon for a beautiful view of the Magic Kingdom. Each bungalow sleeps up to eight people and has two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a full kitchen, dining room, living room, wrap-around deck and — the coolest part — your own private "plunge pool." A stay in one of these exotic units starts at just over \$2,000 a night.



4

BUY A DVC PROPERTY

You know you do it. You walk right past those Disney Vacation Club (DVC) kiosks in the parks as you hurry to your next attraction. But what if you actually stopped to find out about the "best kept secret" at Disney World? If you have the extra cash, and really want to vacation with Disney for the better part of the next 50 years, then buy a Disney Vacation Club property. An initial 100-point purchase into the vacation ownership program will run you at least \$14,000, but it's a small price to pay for the joy of being greeted with a warm "welcome home" every time you arrive to your home resort during your vacation.



3

BUY A THEME PARK PROP

Do you love a particular ride or resort so much that you want to take a piece of it home with you? Well, guess what? You

can! Theme Park Connection, located near The Florida Mall, has small items, like cast member name tags and resort pillows, that can fit any budget — or you can splurge on big ticket items, such as authentic windows and doors from Main Street that have a price tag of \$1,995 each. Universal Studios Florida recently opened Williams of Hollywood Prop Shop, a store that sells props from retired Universal attractions and events, such as items from Twister: Ride It Out and Hollywood Horror Nights. These are the perfect shops for people who want more than an attraction T-shirt.



GET MARRIED AT DISNEY'S WEDDING PAVILION

A wedding at Walt Disney World is an elegant experience you and your guests will never forget. A small, intimate wedding, or vow renewal at a Disney resort starts in the \$5,000 range, but if your dream is to have a fairy tale wedding in Disney's romantic Wedding Pavilion near the Grand Floridian, you will be looking at spending a minimum of \$12,000, and it only goes up from there. But where else in the world can you ride to your wedding in Cinderella's horse-drawn carriage or have a wedding reception on the waters of World Showcase Lagoon for your own private viewing area for IllumiNations? Happiness has a price, but the memories are priceless.



RENT OUT A THEME PARK LAND

The ultimate way to live it up and spend a lot of money at Disney or Universal is to rent out an entire section of a park to yourself (ok, and some of your friends and family — if you want). This can actually be done and it is done on a relatively regular fashion, especially by businesses and corporations holding special events. But you can do it too. Just be sure you have a big enough credit card to cover the expenses. Diagon Alley is a popular place for private events, where all of the shops, restaurants and rides are fully operational during your private time, and you can opt for unlimited Butterbeer too. If you have the cash, there might not be anything more outlandish you could spend it on than having a piece of a park all to yourself.

**DO YOU AGREE WITH BEN
OR HAVE A SUGGESTION
FOR A FUTURE TOP TEN?**

Let us know at
info@attractionsmagazine.com

BEHIND the SCENES

When designing a theme park attraction,
it's all about the story

By Kimberly Button



Brian Morrow, vice president of theme park experience at SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, shows the media storyboards to help explain the story behind Cobra's Curse, a roller coaster opening later this year at Busch Gardens Tampa. The park could just erect a roller coaster with no theming, but adding a story makes it much more immersive.



he exciting moment when a new attraction or theme park land is announced is surpassed only by the moment it opens to guests. In the interim, for the public, there is a lot of waiting and wondering, questioning and speculating about what is actually going on behind the scenes.

Few ever get a glimpse into that hidden world backstage where magic becomes real and stories come to life. Thankfully, some of the individuals who tirelessly work to bring those fanciful worlds to reality took the time to speak with "Attractions Magazine" and let us in on what the process is really like.

Though only a few well-chosen designers are hand-picked to carefully portray the process to the public, in reality there is an army of professionals behind the scenes with titles you have probably never heard of working on crazy deadlines at fast-paced speeds against all odds to make the newest attraction open on time, on budget and live up to the public's expectations.

In their world, the only constant is change. Story is everything. Secrecy is paramount. And you better be a team player.

In the first of a series, we are peeking behind the curtain to see how concepts are created, and learn more about the one thing that absolutely no one involved on the project can do without - the story.

In the Beginning

In the major theme parks, such as Disney, Universal and SeaWorld, there is a creative director on staff that begins that process of taking a fresh look at the theme parks and determining whether there is room for new additions, what needs to be refreshed and what just isn't working for today's guests anymore. At Disney, the process is known as Blue Sky. They are not just looking at the

here and now. In fact, they are also looking a decade or more into the future.

What you will experience at any major theme park 15 years from now is likely on the drawing boards at this very moment.

Large, sweeping design plans are created and toyed with. Some are so grand they will never come to fruition, but they can be the starting off point for more budget-friendly additions. There are archives of ideas that never saw the light of day due to a variety of issues.

"Out of the Blue Sky phase, you



Way before the Skull Island: Reign of Kong attraction got this far along in construction, its story was fully planned. You'll be a part of the story too, when it opens later this year at Universal's Islands of Adventure.

would come up with a concept," said Mark Eades, a former Walt Disney Imagineer show producer who has worked on projects such as Star Tours, the Living Seas Pavilion and Muppet*Vision 3D. "Take Star Tours for example. The Imagineers say we want to do a simulator-based attraction based on the Star Wars universe. That's not much, so you enter concept development phase. You take that broad description and say, 'what does that mean?' It can be as simple as one or two people sitting down and writing out what the concept is going to be beyond that one line.

"Next, you develop the storyline for

it,” said Eades. “You get it to the point where you can develop artwork and a story so you can take it to management in Imagineering and beyond so people can understand it.

“At that point you’re saying, ‘we think this is what it is.’ You’ll get in an estimator to see what it might cost. You ask the experts who tell us how much is this going to cost, from landscapers to film developers. You’ve got a basis to go off of for budgeting and you come out with some artwork, some rough engineering, a few conceptual architectural drawings, a few interior images,” Eades said. “Then you go to management and they say they love the idea - ‘cut the cost by 20 percent.’”

Viable designs start funneling through the upper hierarchy of executives at major theme parks. Considerations such as budget, timing with a major event (such as a movie opening), staffing and what is happening at other parks within their own resort, as well as what is going on at competing attractions, are all heavily weighed.

Once executives have signed off

with their blessing, things start moving pretty quickly behind the scenes, even if the project has not been announced publicly yet. The absolute number one priority is still the story.

Tell Me A Story

Talk with anyone in themed attraction designing for more than five minutes and the word “story” will have been repeated at least 10 times. Seriously. Story is the driving focus of every single aspect of every themed attraction for every person working on it, no matter what company they are working for. Without it, there is no direction.

It is the job of show writers and show producers to develop that story in a way that leaves no doubt as to the direction the project will take. They are among the first to join the process and stay on for most of the project’s design phase.

The term show writer is a bit mis-

SCE



Brian Collins worked as a show writer with Walt Disney Imagineering.



When some attractions are updated, they need a new storyline, such as in Star Tours when C-3PO became the pilot. Videos in the queue help tell the story.



leading. While show writers certainly can and do write stage shows - such as Universal Orlando's Horror Make-Up Show or SeaWorld's Clyde and Seamore's Sea Lion High - their work often involves developing the entire story of a project, from the main overarching theme to smaller aspects such as backstories for characters, signage and even coming up with restaurant names.

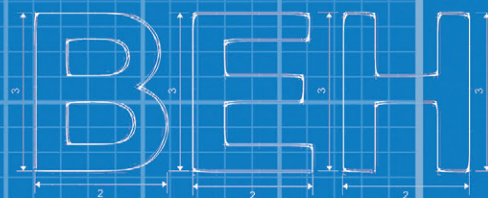
Former Imagineer Brian Collins, who is the founder of WDWithMe.com and the Brainstorm Institute, was a show writer with Walt Disney Imagineering when Disney-MGM Studios was being designed and constructed. His work entailed everything from designing family-friendly graffiti for temporary construction walls on New York Street to writing up informational placards for the props such as Mary Poppins' carousel horse inside The Great Movie Ride queue.

"When the attraction is first con-

ceptualized, one of the very first things that is done is that there is a whole story done about that environment," Collins said. "Show writers can be brought on at any stage, but they are definitely involved from the beginning of any major attraction and they have to be, because they are a very major part of how that story is going to be developed. Even if there is not a dedicated show writer on the team, usually the creative directors who are conceptualizing the attractions are usually guys who have come up through the ranks as writers and designers and architects, so they definitely bring that to the table as they are conceptualizing."

Colette Piceau, a freelance show writer and director, is one of those lucky people not on staff at a theme park who is brought in to help craft the story. "Even if the guest isn't completely aware of what that story is, there is always a story there. If a story is really

The live characters in The Great Movie Ride at Disney's Hollywood Studios have extensive background stories, created to help the cast members better portray them, and enhance the guests' experience.



rich and layered, it feels so real to people that they might not even know that it is there."

Piceau, who started her entertainment industry career as a performer with Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Revue, Adventurers Club and other beloved Disney attractions, works with a team or on her own, depending on the project. She has developed an entire theme park by herself for a client in China, coming up with the story for all the lands, as well as coming up with attraction ideas, in just two weeks. Usually, though, she is a part of a team for a variety of local theme parks and cruise lines, where her work always involves some good old-fashioned studying.

"I really, really enjoy research. I base the storyline on real legends, real stories and real history or use those as a jumping off point. The story is grounded in a loose stretch of reality. Sometimes I have to make up other legends on my own to create some sort of logic for myself and then make up their history and culture," Piceau said.

Cindy White, an attractions designer and art director and founder of Cindy White Art Co., knows that show writers are integral to her job, too. "Projects with a story are usually better than those that do not have a beginning story, because that story and the writer offer so much direction. The writer can explain why you are coming up with whatever the team is asking for. They give you the inspiration. They are one of the most important people when you are starting the project," she said.

Collins added, "The story is shared to the entire team, so whether you are a writer or a lighting designer or doing props or set design or whatever it might be, you have understood what the story is and everything flows from that."

Story development goes far beyond what guests will ever see or touch, yet the extensive work on creating a multi-dimensional story is something the best themed attraction professionals will never skimp on.

"Most people never see it, but the presence of a story is certainly felt in the attraction," said Collins. "For instance, Typhoon Lagoon has a very involved story line. Sometimes elements of that story are made public, such as in Typhoon Lagoon where you can see the placards telling the story. Other times they are not obvious at



From left, Ray Keim with Universal Creative, Cindy White of Cindy White Art Co., and David Hughes with Universal Entertainment Art & Design at the annual Entertainment Designers Forum. The forum is held each spring and benefits the American Cancer Society. Anyone interested in theme park design should make plans to attend.



Designer Melody Matheny created this elaborate sign in the Pantopia area of Busch Gardens Tampa. To make the sign fit into the area, she had to find out a lot of details about the story of the land.

all. For Great Movie Ride, I was asked to write new blocking for the gangster in the show. I actually wrote back stories for each of the characters so the tour guide and the gangster have a one page story of where the character comes from, but it is nothing that the guests would ever see."

Piceau, who has a background in performance as well as show writing, not only will write up a very detailed backstory and description of a character's story - such as street performers in a themed land — so they have a basis for their interaction, but she is often asked to stay onboard to help the chosen performers in developing their roles.

Melody Matheny, a freelance designer and founder of Slice Creative Network, a network of creative freelancers in Central Florida, does graphic design for themed attractions. For her, the story is just as important as it is for the walking, talking characters or the ride engineers.

"The storytellers know what they want, they just don't know completely what that looks like yet," Matheny said. "They have the character in their head so we can sit around a table and they can answer me direct-

ly about visual cues when we are in a meeting. As they come up with their stories, I am kind of analyzing their story and pulling every visual reference that I can.

"If they are telling me a story about an explorer visiting a new country, I ask 'does this explorer have a hammer and tool belt? Are they more into doing research or are they working as an archaeologist?' That would tell me to swing the signage to a field notebook-based prop or one with tools. Obviously, when developing the story with Intellectual Property characters, there are brand style guides and graphic imagery that I need to use and there is a lot more approval processes."

Looking Towards the Future

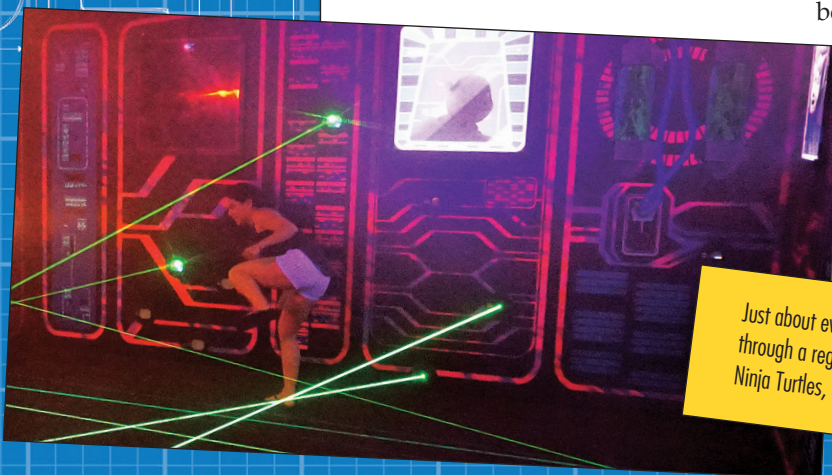
Sometimes developing a story can have growing pains that are visible to the public. "I think Disney's Hollywood Studios is undergoing a very unique transformation unlike anything that has ever been seen in the attraction industry," said Collins. "What they are trying to do is transform a park that was already built with one focus and, wow, talk about changing the story! They are certainly doing that. It's just going to take time for the development to happen because they're using an existing park."

So the story has been labored over, tweaked and then tweaked again. There is now a great idea to bring to life, but ground hasn't even been broken yet. What comes next?

Who's doing the work? When does story development actually start hurting the process, rather than helping? Find out in the second part of our series in a future issue.



If you pay close attention, you may notice placards posted around a themed area. These help tell the story, such as this placard in a flowerbed at Disney Springs. Just remember, you're in a themed area and it's all part of the fictional story.



Just about every attraction can be made better with a story. Would you rather go through a regular laser maze or a laser maze themed to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, complete with graphic and sound effects?



LAST SPLASH

FOR WET 'N WILD

How the World's First Waterpark Was Built



With the announcement of Volcano Bay, a “water theme park” set to open next year at Universal Orlando, came the announcement that Universal’s Wet ‘n Wild will be closing at the end of 2016. Although many guests have enjoyed Wet ‘n Wild for years, most don’t know the history of what is widely acknowledged to be the world’s first waterpark. Here we pay tribute to the park by publishing an extract from the biography of park founder George Millay entitled “The Wave Maker”.

In June 1974, George Millay had left SeaWorld (which he also founded) and was in a fresh creative state of mind. The idea of a gated water recreation facility consumed him, but what would it consist of? What would it entail? How much of a critical mass would need to be created to attract the hundreds of thousands of paying customers needed? Would people pay money to go swim-

ming? Those were just a few of the questions that he was pondering. Orlando was his choice to build such a facility, the closer to Disney the better.

Don Stewart of ERA (Economics Research Associates) was asked to conduct the feasibility study for the new park idea. “Being a totally new concept, we didn’t have much to base the study on,” Stewart remembers, adding that the International Drive area in which George chose to build was nearly empty at the time. Wet ‘n Wild was the fifth development along the drive. “Even his early sense of selecting a site in a new untested market was uncanny,” Stewart said.

Between 1974 and 1976, Millay sold about a third of his SeaWorld stock, which amounted to approximately 30,000 shares. He knew he was selling them at lousy prices, but knew he had to in order to finance the early stages of his waterpark dream.

He had learned a great deal from his experiences at SeaWorld (describing his departure as “bitter, bitter, bitter, very, very bitter”) and had pledged to protect himself right from the beginning on his next venture. Before he had taken in a penny from the other Wet ‘n Wild investors, Millay had





An aerial view of Wet 'n Wild. The property is now owned by Universal Orlando, but they haven't stated what they will be doing with it after the park closes at the end of the year.

already invested \$400,000 of his own money into the project.

The Early Days of International Drive

During the winter of 1975, Millay and John Shawen, a former Disney financial planner, went to Orlando and struck a land deal with a local developer, Major Realty. They were given an option on 17-acres of land on International Drive. They got a split piece of property, a parking lot on one side of what is now Universal Drive, with the park on the other side, next to the lake.

The original Wet 'n Wild was projected to cost approximately \$3.5 million and by the time the first few investors bought in, Millay had put nearly \$500,000 of his own money into the project. His one-time cosmetics partner, Al Slavik, had great faith in Millay and at one time during their relationship told him that he would gladly be a



George Millay, second from left, with some Japanese businessmen at the park in the '80s.

part of any of his future projects. Remembering Slavik's comment, Millay called and invited him and his wife Joy down to Orlando to see the property and the plans for the waterpark. Slavik saw that site on International Drive and was ready to invest.

Slavik said, "Okay, George, I'll buy the land and own it, and lease it back to you for 40 years, and I'll also build two or three of the rides. You select them and I'll build them. I'll own the rides and I'll lease them back to you over a seven-year period and after that you will own them."

Slavik's agreement to become a landlord instead of an equity investor finally solved the puzzle of "how in the world do we raise enough money for a prototype project that allowed Millay to maintain total control," Shawen noted. "Once Slavik came forward, most of the other potential investors, all of which Millay had dealings with in the past, came aboard."

A Good deal For All Parties

SeaWorld contractor Falck Nielsen and his wife Charlotte became equity partners, as did builder John Buchanan

and his wife Jeannie, as well as Paul Hughes, who had been an original investor in SeaWorld with his Hawaiian Punch company. Tom Curnan, the company's New York attorney came into the deal, as did Kelly Smith, their Orlando attorney.

Slavik's total contribution amounted to nearly \$1.5 million, and Millay and the other investors came up with the rest, about \$2 million. With financing in place, the legal corporation for the Orlando facility was formed in March 1976.

To this day, Millay doubts whether he would have been able to build the park if it had not been for Slavik. It was a good deal for Millay because he got to create his park and maintain control, and it was an extremely good deal for Slavik. The land that was purchased in 1976 for \$600,000 was worth approximately \$25

An original ticket from 1977. It was only \$3.75 to get into the park.



For many years, Wet 'n Wild offered water skiing, with guests being pulled by an automated line around the lake in the back of the property.



million by 2003 and during the 23 years that Millay owned the company, Wet 'n Wild paid nearly \$20 million to Slavik and his family in lease payments.

When Slavik died, his three sons took over ownership of the land on which the park sits today. "That's one of the reasons we sold to Universal in 1998. Our lease terms were extremely favorable for the first 20 years, but it had started to escalate a little each year and by 2007 it would have been overwhelming. In 2012, it would have gone

through the roof. We were looking to the future," Millay said.

Recognizing that the park had such a very favorable lease, Slavik's sons were after Millay for more money. "We were only paying \$700,000 a year in rent, but since the land had escalated so much in value, the sons thought they should be getting more money. I wouldn't negotiate. We never went to court, but they were chaffing because we were so successful."

Before his death, Millay predicted that Universal, which purchased the park in 1998, would move Wet 'n Wild from its current location to Universal Orlando Resort property before the 2012 escalation in the lease. He was nearly correct. Universal will close the park in 2016 and in 2017 open an entirely new water theme park called Volcano Bay. It will be the resort's third gated attraction.

Innovation, Not Invention

The concept of Wet 'n Wild, the world's first waterpark, was one of innovation more than one of invention. Millay was the first person to bring various water-based elements together into one environment, put a fence around them and charge admission. He discovered many of the elements that would later be a part of his waterpark concept during his SeaWorld years.

His first "discovery" was in 1970 on the grounds of the Canadian National Exposition in Toronto. He and George Becker, then GM of SeaWorld Ohio, went up to look at a water ski show. While there, Millay became totally impressed by the water playground of Eric MacMillan, a



Canadian architect. MacMillan would later be inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame for the creation of the interactive wet and dry playground industry.

The next big discovery took place during the summer of 1974, after Millay left SeaWorld. On vacation near Lake Tahoe, he saw a group of kids sliding down a hill into a natural, dirty watering hole. It was a little gunite flume, crude and hard. The total drop was no more than 25 feet, and it dumped riders into a water hole where cows would come to drink. Millay thought to himself that this was really something. He now had at least two elements for the waterpark, slides and an interactive playground.

He next learned of something called a wave pool in Decatur, Ala. George was amused by the concept. "You mean it actually makes waves in a swimming pool, no kidding." Big Surf in Phoenix had been in existence for 10 years and it had a large tsunami wave pool that offered swimmers one big rolling wave. It was too big, didn't have enough capacity, and was too specialized for what George was looking for.

The next day George was on a plane to Decatur. It was a hot night, the lights were on and the wave pool was packed. "I put on my bathing suit and got into the pool, and I had a ball." By the time George finished playing that night, he knew he had found that one large, missing element for his waterpark.

He now had slides, a children's playground and a wave pool. That was the core of the first Wet 'n Wild, along with all its auxiliary gift shops, restaurants, first aid and maintenance. No one had ever combined those elements into one large offering.

Father of the Waterpark Industry

Millay is given the credit for creating the first waterpark and is fondly known as the "Father of the Waterpark Industry." He had the forethought to be the first. The waterpark elements were all appearing one at a time without Millay, but he was the one who had the vision to put them together to form a unique complex.

By early 1976, Millay had a concept, had proposals, proformas and feasibility studies, but no name. During lunch with potential investor Chuck Pratt, Millay explained, "You know, it's very wet and wild." Pratt stopped George. "That's the name of the place right there, wet and wild!" George liked it and sat down with a

graphic designer who created the Wet 'n Wild logo and the two mascot characters, Splish and Splash.

Walt Disney World's River Country had been open a year when Wet 'n Wild Orlando opened. Whilst Disney's park contained several water attractions, it didn't have a wave pool and had only one major slide. However, it was the closest thing to a "water park" that existed at that time.

When Millay first envisioned his water-based concept, he didn't call it a waterpark. He was calling it by several names, including a water playground and an outdoor water recreational playground. Nobody knows for sure who first called an attraction of this genre a waterpark. They didn't officially start calling it a "waterpark" until the third season.

In creating the first television spots for Wet 'n Wild, shareholder John Seeker realized more than ever that he was dealing with an entirely new industry. "We had no stock film to use, as everyone does now," he said. "We ended up working with photos and film that weren't of our park."

After forgetting to make arrangements with a campground in California, Millay told Seeker to show and start shooting water slide footage anyway. He hired a local cameraman and they got enough footage before the owner came out. He was quite angry, even after Seeker explained what they were doing, and kicked them out of the park. "Thank God we had enough we could use for a TV spot," says Seeker. "He had no idea we used the film in Florida."

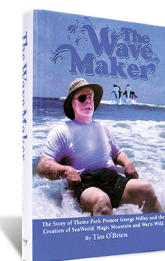
Slow Start, Long Legacy

When Wet 'n Wild Orlando opened,

business was slow. The concept was new and fun, but George found that its scope wasn't large enough. "He realised very quickly that the number of elements and the entertainment value were not enough to give it the breadth and value to make it a standalone park," Shawen said.

As per any new, successful concept, it wasn't long before copycat waterparks started showing up all over the country. George had been warned of that possibility by a venture capitalist years before. He spotted something before construction even started on the first park, when George was out trying to raise money. He said, "You know, George, you have a great idea here, and wouldn't it be great to build five of these at one time in strategic sunny locations across the country so nobody could compete with you?"

George started thinking again that he should develop multiple parks. When he sold the company in 1998, there were Wet 'n Wild parks in Arlington (Texas), Las Vegas and Brazil. Some of these have since changed names or been replaced by new versions from new owners (as is the case in Vegas), and the original park in Orlando will soon be no more, but George Millay's legacy as pioneer of the waterpark industry remains.



"The Wave Maker", by Tim O'Brien, is published by Casa Flamingo Literary Arts and available on Amazon.com. Edited extract used by permission and first published in Park World magazine (park world-online.com).



The last attraction added to Wet 'n Wild was Blastaway Beach water playground in 2012.

Celebrating



PHOTOS BY CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



With its color and style, La Nouba is simply a celebration of the imagination and audacity of the human spirit.

THE NEW IN *LA NOUBA*

By Simon & Susan Veness

The combination of Disney and Cirque du Soleil has been a winning one ever since the 1998 expansion of the old Downtown Disney area into the West Side introduced the world-famous circus company in its eye-catching purpose-built theater.

Cirque's specially-designed show, *La Nouba*, has been an institution ever since, running twice a night, five times a week in front of breathless audiences and to standing ovations. It remains as fresh today as it was 18 years ago, and one of the reasons for that is the careful process of change and evolution it has undergone over the years.

For anyone who hasn't seen it, *La Nouba* is nothing less than a celebration of the imagination and audacity of the human spirit, a feel-good exercise in what can be accomplished with creativity, grace and no small amount of physical daring.

And, for those who have seen it, there are now three wonderful reasons to visit again, over and above the simple joy and excitement it provides.

The evolution has taken a distinct turn for the dramatic in recent months, though, as Cirque has given its Orlando production a real shot in the arm with the biggest change in the show's line-up since it first started.

Over the previous 18 years, the nine main acts have been switched out several times, but never to the extent of the current 're-imagining', with Artistic Director Daniel Ross reckoning that almost the first third of *La Nouba* is now brand new.

"We thought the opening of the show needed to have a little revision," said



PHOTO BY CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

New opening act the B-Boys bring a sense of urban flair as well as hip-hop dance moves and energy to the show. The trio, above, from left, are known as Incredible Josh, Bebo and Flying Buddha in their stage guise, and off-stage, pictured right, from left, as Jean Carlos Lloret, Dmytro Li, and Josh Ortiz without their Cirque make-up and costuming.



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

Ross. "So we brought in two new acts. We wanted to stay with the urban feel of the show's ethos, so we felt it was time to try something else from street culture and have kept the opening urban and powerful with dance."

Breakout Act

Enter the B-Boys, Josh Ortiz, Jean Carlos Lloret and Dmytro Li, otherwise known as Incredible Josh, Bebo and Flying Buddha for their break-dancing, B-boying act that draws on 30 years of hip-hop dance

and the trio's own influences from Ukraine, Puerto Rico and the Bronx.

The threesome bring a burst of vibrant, physical joie de vivre to the opening act, adding genuine street cred to Cirque's effortless vitality, highlighted by *La Nouba*'s Head Coach Matthew Sparks, who said, "The B-Boys segment fits in like it has always been there. They have a feeling in the performance that they are part of the show's urban world but they are already something different. They drive the energy of the show early on."

The Boys were brought together individually for the show and are equally eager to make an impression as the first genuine hip-hop act in any Cirque performance. Jean, born in Puerto Rico but raised in Boston, said, "We grew up watching each other on YouTube as there is a whole culture centered around the hip-hop world." Amazingly, his 'So You Think You Can Dance' audition video has had more than a million views.

Dmytro has the most diverse background, having been born to a Russian

mother and Korean father in Novosibirsk and grown up in the city of Kharkiv, which is now in the Ukraine. "I have been dancing since I was 16 and love what I do. I am so glad I have this job and get to work with these two guys. This culture came from the streets and gave people something positive to believe in, and we want to bring it to a wider audience. The best for us is when the crowd screams and shouts."

Josh, who hails from the Bronx, is equally delighted to be able to bring the act to the Cirque format. He said, "I come from a family of B-Boys so I have been around it since I was very young. I trained in the streets for years and years until I was ready."

"I have done some amazing jobs, and happened to meet Matthew Sparks when I was working on a cruise ship. Five years later he called me and I got the job and the chance to meet these incredible guys. The chemistry is perfect and they are like brothers to me. It has been an incredible journey and I know this is our time, and we will take it to its limits."

Above the Crowd

Following the dynamic B-Boys is the second new act in La Nouba, the Aerial Bamboo ballet of Alexander and Ekaterina Abramov. The Russian duo hail from two completely different cities, Alexander from Moscow and Ekaterina from Chelyabinsk in the Ural Mountains. They have been together for 15 years and initially worked on different routines before combining for this long-established aerial act in 2004 when Cirque was auditioning for a couple to pick up the tradition.

Alexander started doing gymnastics at six, and at 11 joined a circus doing a teeter-board routine. Then he went into the army, and came back to join Cirque, doing teeter-board and trampoline. After meeting Ekaterina, they started working on the aerial bamboo when another couple who performed it were looking to retire.

Ekaterina told us, "I knew this other husband and wife, and they wanted to pass it on to someone else who was just as passionate about it as they were. Every time I saw them perform, I wanted to cry because it was such an emotional feeling. Now I hope our audiences feel the same thing as we would like them to take something good from this show."

The grace and flair of the duo is clear to see, along with no small amount of nerve and physical strength. Their combination of aerial gymnastics is totally breathtaking, and just what Artistic Director Ross was hoping to add.

He explained, "The Aerial Bamboo act used to be done on a piece of bamboo, hence the name, but we are more modern and efficient so we use a stainless-steel bar. This act is less common now and we thought it was a good fit for this position in the show, because the second act has always been more poetic and we didn't want to lose that, as well as wanting to keep the traditional circus idea of being up in the air. It is a love story, basically, that they actually put on stage every day."

Bring in the Clowns

Winding in and out of the show – and acting as a hilarious pre-show among the audience – are The Pablos, a pair of crazy clowns who were introduced just over a year ago in place of Balto and Sergey, the previous clown duo who had been with La Nouba since the start.



Russian husband-and-wife act Alexander and Ekaterina Abramov have 12 years of experience performing the breathtaking and daring Aerial Bamboo routine and are equally as graceful off-stage.

PHOTO BY CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA



The eye-catching Cirque du Soleil theater remains one of the most striking and iconic landmarks on the Disney Springs horizon. It's a testament to the company's unique style.

The addition of the Pablos helps to underline the all-new nature of the opening segments and create a freshness about the show that doesn't mask its essential integrity and energy.

Ross added, "As the show evolves, there is a lot of room for your imagination to fill the gaps. Cirque shows are very organic, there is a lot of space. Even though your senses are over-stimulated, there is not a straight narrative.

"The cleaning lady is a central character but there is a sense that the fairytales around her break out of the boring, everyday world, with love stories, a



The recent addition of the zany clown duo, the Pablos, helps to give La Nouba another extra shot of energy and freshness that is still in keeping with the show's integrity and enormous sense of fun.



There's no mistaking that all-action street dance flair of the B-Boys as they highlight the show's opening act among the original characters and performers who populate the brilliantly inventive world of La Nouba.

birthday party and other acts that lead you through a range of emotions, culmi-

nating in the big Power-Track finale that is just one big party. The urban component gives way to characters that are more lively and colorful.

"We start from that urban world and slowly break out of it. There are so many little details and action happening all over the stage, it is worth paying attention to that depth of the show. I like to look out for the four little girls who perform the Diabolo act as they appear on stage at other times in the background and doing different things. It shows how much there is to take in."

Indeed there is. Which is why, even if you have seen the show before, there is plenty more to enjoy. And, with the B-Boys, Aerial Bamboo and the Pablos, La Nouba now boasts a whole new range of emotions, thrills and downright world-class entertainment that maintains circus' long-standing tradition as the Greatest Show On Earth.

PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

PHOTO BY CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

By Barb Nefer

Omni Resort ChampionsGate

Close to Attractions, Far From Distractions



The Omni Resort ChampionsGate is located just west of Walt Disney World, a short distance off Interstate 4.

The family pool and lazy river are a perfect cool-down spot, and rental cabanas offer a private relaxation spot.



For those who visit Walt Disney World but don't stay on Disney property, popular off-site hotel spots include State Road 535 or Highway 192. Those areas are close and convenient, but with a very "touristy" feel. However, there's another spot that offers the convenience, but in a peaceful environment, with amenities aimed at the whole family.

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate is just off I-4, only two exits past World Drive, the road that leads right to Disney's Hollywood Studios, Epcot, and the Magic Kingdom. Its proximity to I-4 makes it a perfect gateway if you're visiting other Central Florida attractions as well. Head east to get to SeaWorld, Universal and the International Drive attractions, or go west and take the next exit (Highway 27) to get to Legoland. Continue west if your plans include Busch Gardens Tampa.

According to Jean Spaulding, director of sales and marketing for the Omni Orlando Resort, "'Close to the attractions, far from the distractions' is a tag line we have adopted since many of our returning guests love our proximity to the parks and shopping, but also enjoy not having to leave the resort to stay entertained. We offer complimentary shuttles to Disney for those who come for that special experience, but we are happy to provide a complete weekend and vacation experience on property."

Built in 2004 and renovated eight years later, the resort has more than 700 guest rooms of various types.

Serene Surroundings

The Omni Orlando Resort stands out from many other hotels surrounding Disney World because of its tranquil surroundings. Many off-site hotels and resorts are nestled amidst miles of fast food restau-



Views from many of the rooms include the pool and on-site golf course.



A bright, spacious, well-appointed lobby welcomes guests to the resort.

rants, souvenir shops and small tourist attractions. While that's a draw for some families, it also means traffic, noise and a potentially hectic atmosphere.

The ChampionsGate area is more laid back. While you'll pass some restaurants, gas stations, and even a grocery store on your way to the Omni, you're transported into another world once you turn down the driveway. The spacious

grounds serve as a buffer from the world, and the resort is an attraction on its own for those days when you want to take a break from the theme parks.

Accommodations

The Omni Orlando Resort has standard rooms with one king or two queen beds and deluxe balcony rooms that add an outdoor space. Studio suites are also available for families who need more room. If you're planning a family reunion or other group travel, the resort also has villas that offer the comforts of home and a little more, including full kitchens, TVs in every bedroom, and a private swimming pool.

Paradise for Kids

While the Omni Orlando Resort is a golf destination and a popular convention spot, it honors its location in the heart of Central Florida attractions by catering to kids too. According to Spaulding, "Our philosophy at the resort is that families are our business, especially on weekends and holidays. Orlando and Kissimmee are family destinations,

and we recognize the significance of this market.

"Our job in the hospitality industry is to cater to all customer groups, so for families we think about how to make it fun for all ages. From our turndown cookies and milk on arrival to our arrival gift Omni backpack for kids, we understand that if the kids are having a great time, so are the parents. Our Camp Omni even lets the adults have some alone time in the evenings, as we offer movies and other activities for the little ones."

Onsite fun includes a family pool and a lazy river to float away an afternoon. The family pool also features a whirlpool and corkscrew waterslide aimed at youngsters, although it's not unusual to see "big kids" taking the plunge too.

If you plan to take a day off from the theme parks and hang out at the pools, you can rent a private cabana for your family. Amenities inside include towels, a television and Wi-Fi. It eliminates the need to hurry to the pool to claim a lounge chair, as the cabana is yours to enjoy for the whole day.



A variety of shops and restaurants offer a chance to snack, browse or dine right at the resort.

Younger family members may also enjoy hanging out at Camp Omni Kids Escape. It's open on Friday and Saturday evenings from 5 to 10 p.m. and costs \$12 per hour, which includes dinner at 7 p.m. Activities include movies, board games, video games and supervised activities. It's a great option for parents who want to spend some "adult time" together. If you dine at David's Club or Zen (two of the on-site restaurants) while your kids are in the club, you'll get a 50 percent discount on the first two hours.

The Omni Orlando Resort has seasonal activities, depending on when you stay. One of the most popular is the on-site fireworks display, which happens on holidays and during busy seasons.

Fun for Adults

The Omni Orlando Resort is a golf destination, with two 18 hole courses designed by architect/golfer Greg Norman, a lighted nine-hole par three course if you prefer a lesser challenge and a driving range. If you need to brush up on your skills, the resort is the world headquarters for the David Leadbetter Golf Academy.

Spa treatments are a tempting option at Mokara Spa, which has an extensive menu of face and body treatments and salon services. Spending long days at the theme parks can cause sore muscles and a heightened stress level, but treatments like an anti-aging guava ritual or a deep tissue massage restore a sense of peace and calm.

Array of Dining Options

Although it's only a short drive to everything from fast food to gourmet meals, the Omni has plenty of on-site dining options. Seven unique culinary experiences include the Broadway Deli, which is great for quick bites, and Morsel's, which is the spot to refuel with a cup of Starbucks coffee and a pastry. Croc's is a convenient restaurant and bar overlooking the pool area.

If you're looking for something substantial, David's Club, Trevi's and Zen offer a trio of tempting options. David's Club is a sports bar with bar-style appetizers and entrees ranging from light salads all the way up to juicy steaks. Zen serves up pan-Asian dishes and has an intimate sushi and sake bar if you're looking for a low-key, relaxing atmosphere. Trevi's focuses on fresh Italian cuisine and takes that freshness quite seriously, right down to an outdoor herb gar-



Above: Comfortable rooms provide a great "home base" when visiting Disney World and other Orlando attractions.

Below: David's Club, one of the on-site restaurants, is an upscale sports bar serving a variety of fare, from bar snacks to steaks.



den, and Spaulding said it has "a very special omelet bar at the Art of Breakfast Buffet each morning."

Parking and Transportation

The hotel provides free transportation to and from Disney World's Transportation and Ticket Center four times a day. They also have a car rental desk on site. Self parking is \$18 per night, but locals can get their parking validated when they dine at one of the finer restaurants.

Spaulding sums up the resort's philosophy as "a complete getaway experience for all ages." She said, "Families, singles and multigenerational guests enjoy just about anything they want in a week

or a weekend at the resort. Our most important job is to make every guest feel like we are here for them and to give them many reasons to return."

OMNI ORLANDO RESORT AT CHAMPIONSGATE

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Location: 1500 Masters Boulevard,
ChampionsGate, FL 33896
Prices: \$139 to \$289 per night for
a standard room
Phone: (407) 390-6664
Online: omnihotels.com/orlando



Inside, the detail - both large and small - is just as convincing, with nods to the Jungle Cruise ride and Enchanted Tiki Room.

The exterior of the Skipper Canteen is a beautiful re-purposing of the former Adventureland Veranda, which previously served as a character meet-and-greet for Pixie Hollow as well as being a counter-service restaurant in the Magic Kingdom's early days. Now it has a whole new lease on life, but looks like it has always been a part of Adventureland.

By Susan and Simon Veness

Try the World Famous Jungle Cruise Cuisine at Skipper Canteen

Take one of Walt Disney World's most iconic characters, add an imaginative storyline and a creative menu and you've got Jungle Cruise Skipper Canteen, filled with groan-inducing jokes and "just a whiff of piranha" in the water.

From the décor to the menu, everything in this innovative full-service restaurant at Magic Kingdom revolves around the backstory. When we sat down with Alex Grayman, art director at Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI), he began there. "Two years ago I got a call about a great opportunity; the fairies were moving to Main Street and their former facility could be turned

back into a restaurant. We held a WDI brainstorm session and asked ourselves, what fits in Adventureland? Is it Tarzan, Aladdin, pirates? But each had a detractor to it. Then someone threw out Jungle Skippers, an iconic character to Disney fans. Everyone knows and loves the Jungle Skippers. It was a perfect tie-in. What if this building was the headquarters of the Jungle Navigation Company? Skippers clock in, they bunk here, have their meals here. We have our mess hall, we have hungry tourists taking jungle cruises, and they have nowhere to eat. Why don't we invite them in to use our mess hall? Within the story, the Canteen became so popular we had to



Attention to detail is paramount in Skipper Canteen, with a huge array of period notices and newspaper clippings. Go ahead, call the number advertised.



The main part of the restaurant's interior is the Crew Mess Hall, a large dining space that was originally where the Jungle Cruise skippers came for their meals (according to the elaborate backstory). Now its double-height space is packed with memorabilia, messages, curiosities and collectibles, all with a brilliant and coherent Adventureland theming.



The S.E.A. dining room is cleverly located behind the bookcases that originally kept it hidden from view, in story terms, and is now left open with the entry bookcase permanently slid to one side to reveal the room.



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

Many of the books themselves were created by the Imagineers, with fanciful titles or nods to the designers who worked on the Skipper Canteen. But the book that “triggers” the hidden door is an original copy of “The Jungle Book”.



One of three “office” doors on the upper level of the Mess Hall that feature an homage to Disney Legends who worked on the Jungle Cruise. This one is for one of Disney’s original Imagineers, Marc Davis.

rant and tie it into the story. There’s an elephant on a shelf as part of the restaurant’s décor and skippers will say, ‘I didn’t want to mention this, but, ladies and gentlemen, there is an elephant in the room.’ They point up and everybody bursts out laughing. They’ve learned to tie in their own funny lines.”

Al Youngman, chef de cuisine, joined in, offering his insights on one of the most interesting theme park menus we’ve seen since Yak and Yeti opened at Disney’s Animal Kingdom. “The idea was brought to our research and development team and, as culinarians and chefs, we explored the story of where the skippers travel. We looked at what food comes from the story’s four rivers — South American, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Chinese — and we brought our WDI partners in to make sure it tied to their story and established how the menu items were some of the skippers’ favorite dishes brought back from their travels. Things like Falls Family Falafel and Dr. Falls Signature Grilled Steak; S.E.A. Shu Mai; and Tastes Like Chicken Because It Is; that brings in the unique brand of humor of the Jungle Cruise. I’m proud of having named that one; it’s really cool, it has a twist, and it adds to the story. The name even sounds like the way our servers explain the dish.”

“We’re elevating table service at Magic Kingdom,” Chef Youngman continued, “so it’s adventurous, but there are still familiar things. We thought the fish collar might be hard for guests, but when they order it they’re blown away.”

It was easy to see why. The fish collar was part of our lunch, with Chef Al serving up a selection of his “greatest hits”, beginning with a small loaf of Ambasha bread, whose pleasingly bitter bite was offset by a side of local orange honey infused with coriander, cardamom and fenugreek. We moved on to the Falls Family Falafel, which had a superb exterior crunch with a soft, moist interior, unlike most falafel, which can be dry and crumbly. The spiced ground beef in Skip’s Mac and Cheese added an extra layer of richness to the dish, giving it a sophisticated flavor. It’s a heavy dish, easily split between two with an appetizer.

Next we sampled the popular S.E.A. Shu Mai appetizer, little packets of deliciousness filled with minced shrimp, pork and mung beans wrapped in Gyoza skins, then steamed and served with a soy-based sauce. The Sustainable Fish Collar, set off by tart Green Papaya Salad, was beautifully

expand into other areas of the building, like Albert Falls’ old Society of Explorers and Adventurers (S.E.A.) meeting area, and his private reception room. He didn’t live here, but he would entertain guests here. The story almost wrote itself.”

WDI brought in Kevin Lively from Glendale, Calif., the man responsible for the Jungle Cruise world-wide, to make sure their stories were consistent. Grayman said, “When new jokes need approval they go through Kevin, who was the show writer and a former skipper in Anaheim. Before, Albert Falls wasn’t established as the founder of the Jungle Navigation Company. In our story, he had a son who married a woman from India and they had a daughter, Alberta, who they named after him. When he passed, he left this enterprise to her.”

Jungle Cruise skippers’ unique humor is part of the Canteen experience, and skippers and former skippers from the attraction were brought over as staff and as part of the original training team, honing servers’ ability to rattle off corny one-liners. Manager Victoria Thompson explained, “Skippers can play on what’s in the restau-

buttery, with a long finish. The Rice Noodle Bowl had a mild heat, and when Simon mentioned he likes brain-blasting fieriness, he was given Sriracha sauce and sliced red chilies on the side to adjust for his taste. The depth of flavor, with its hot, spicy edge, jumped all over the palate, a rare level of tantalizing burn in a theme park dish.

Vegetarian options demand creativity on the part of the chef if they're going to be interesting, and skill with seasonings if they're going to be tasty. Chef Al's Curried Vegetable Curry Stew — a trio of roasted acorn squash, lentils, and sautéed collard greens — can rightfully be called one of the best vegetarian dishes in Orlando, its Indian-inspired aromatics so pronounced and well-balanced even carnivores will forget there's no meat. It's no wimpy dish either. Despite being vegetables and legumes, it's exceptionally hearty.

We finished with Kungaloosh (nod to the old Adventurers Club at Pleasure Island), a moist chocolate cake with caramelized bananas and cashew-caramel ice cream, dusted with coffee powder. If you love chocolate, you already know this is a must-try. Be warned: its salty-sweet goodness is addictive. But don't rule out the refreshing Coconut Bar with Pineapple-Basil Compote and Vanilla Ice Cream (in fact, get both). It's subtler but equally distinctive — ideal for Florida's hotter months. Neither dessert is large, making them perfect finales with no guilt.

Menus evolve, and it's likely Skipper Canteen's will follow suit, but it's a winner just as it is. With so much detail, we were tempted to spend hours exploring, but our skipper delivered the famous line, "I love you like family. Now get out! I'm sorry, that was rude. Please get out."



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

While the restaurant looks amazing, the food is equally good, and vegetarians can rejoice in the fact there is a highly tempting and tasty dish just for them in the shape of the Indian-inspired Curried Vegetable Stew, which features a hearty mix of legumes.



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

When it comes to dessert, the Skipper Canteen has some equally tantalizing selections, highlighted by the signature Kungaloosh, which nods to the old Adventurers Club on Pleasure Island and is a superb chocolate cake, banana and ice cream creation.

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Entrees:	\$17 - \$34
Desserts:	\$8
Kid's Entrees:	\$9.50 - \$12.50
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Online:	disneyworld.com
Hours:	Lunch 11 a.m. - 2:55 p.m.; Dinner 3 - 9:30 p.m.

Skipper Canteen is on the Disney Dining Plan.

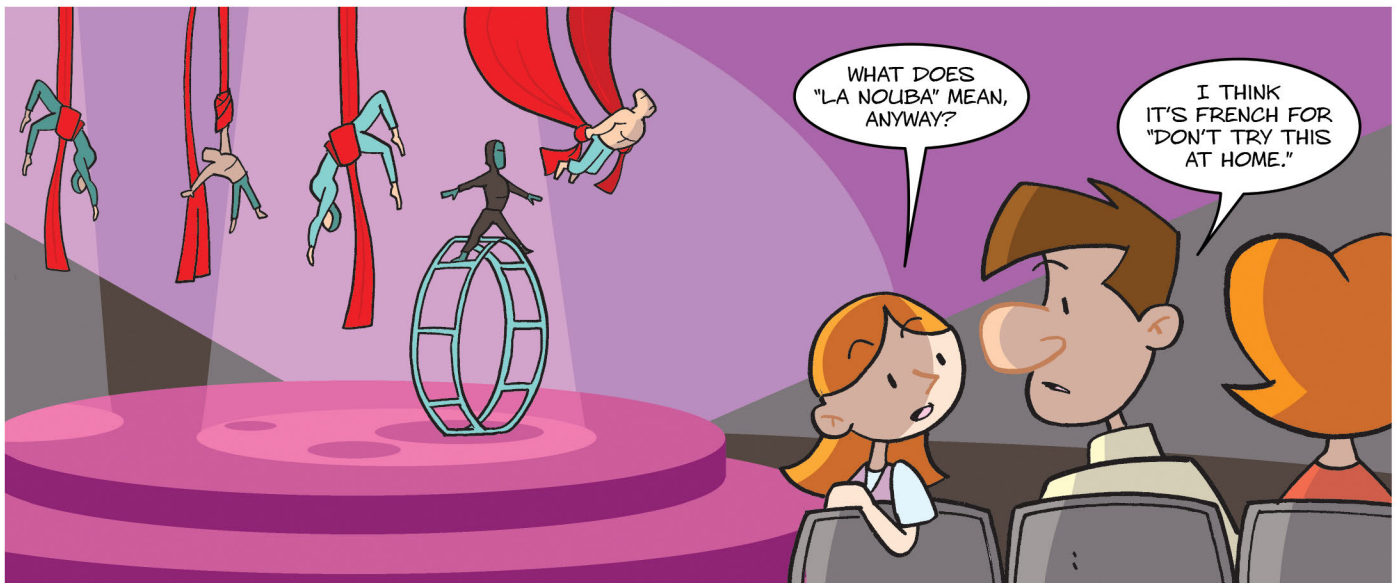
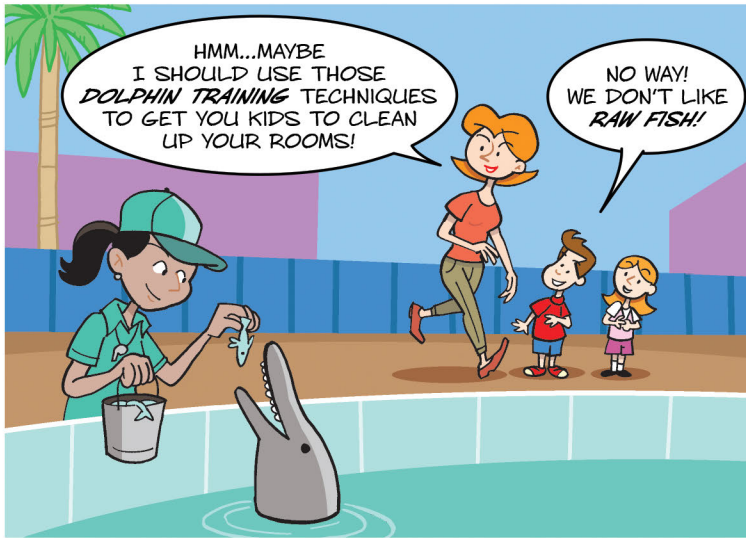


Remember to check out all the detail packed into the decor and artwork, with some wonderful period touches from the 1920s and '30s, as well as photos that reference the Jungle Cruise and its trademark sense of humor.



AMUSEMENT PARK

By John Green & Pat Lewis





SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 10 differences in these two photos?

You can meet some of the stars of The Lego Movie 4D, now showing at Legoland Florida and California.



1. Unikitty's horn is shorter. 2. Unikitty grew a fourth eyelash on her right eye. 3. The Legoland logo has disappeared from the back wall (top right center of photo). 4. Risky Business (fourth person from the left side) has turned his smile to a frown. 5. Wyldstyle (third person from the left side) has transposed her two hair colors (pink and blue). 6. Wyldstyle now has a longer zipper on her coat. 7. Emmet (second person from left side) has a vertical stripe on his suit which is now thinner. 8. Emmet is missing one of the black blocks from the bottom of his suit jacket. 9. The logo on Benny's chest (first person on left) has moved down. 10. Benny now has a logo on his helmet.



THE RUMOR QUEUE

By Fowl Owlerson

Hello, Attractions readers! Welcome to another edition of "The Rumor Queue"! I recently moved from a juniper to a pine tree and I must say, unpacking is a lot of work.



Without further ado, join me, your fine-feathered friend, for a roundup of the latest theme park rumors.

Universal Orlando Resort and Universal Hollywood

Terminator 2: 3-D, Shrek 4-D and Fear Factor Live may be on the chopping block for Universal Orlando. "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" is rumored to be part of a future Wizarding World expansion, likely in The Lost Continent, although Fear Factor Live could be used for the expansion.

On the West Coast, Universal Hollywood is rumored to be moving forward with Diagon Alley and The Secret Life of Pets, which will require the removal of The Mummy, WaterWorld and potentially two soundstages on the lot.

A source disclosed the plan is to open The Secret Life of Pets in Hollywood first, then bring the attraction over to Orlando as a replacement for Shrek 4-D. Toon Lagoon

Amphitheater is one of the rumored sites for the ride, but I've heard that Universal Creative would prefer to put a Marvel attraction there, which makes sense as the space is on the edge of Toon Lagoon and borders Marvel Super Hero Island.

Walt Disney World and Disneyland

Disney's Hollywood Studios will be under heavy construction over the next few years, including rumored parking lot changes and a new entrance, as well as the new rumored name "Disney's Hollywood Adventure". I've heard "Zootopia" will be integrated into a future Walt Disney World attraction, although specifics were not disclosed.

Previously, Epcot was rumored to be getting attractions based on Inside Out, Ratatouille and Hayao Miyazaki's filmography, and these are still on the table for Imagineering. I received a tip that the replacement for Innoventions West, will be unveiled soon. It's rumored to be a new experience themed after Big Hero 6. Baymax is already meeting guests daily in Innoventions.

Nickelodeon in Orlando

With Nick Hotel dropping its

Nickelodeon branding, it ends a big part of Viacom's presence in Orlando. But I received a rumor that Viacom is in talks with theme parks in the Central Florida area for expanded use of its Nickelodeon properties, including "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." Speculation points to Universal Orlando as being a strong match since they are already using SpongeBob and Dora, but SeaWorld Orlando and Busch Gardens Tampa could also be potential candidates.

SeaWorld Orlando

I've heard that a version of the motion simulator ride Wild Arctic featuring characters from the "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" will replace the seasonal "Polar Express" edition. A dark ride based on SeaWorld's "Sea Rescue" television show is also rumored to be in the works for Orlando, although the location is unknown.

DISCLAIMER

The thoughts expressed here are not purported as fact and should be viewed as hearsay until officially confirmed or denied by the companies mentioned.

Have a rumor, comment, or question? Send them our way at info@attractionsmagazine.com. You can also strike up a conversation with yours truly on Twitter @fowlowlerson.



MYSTERY PHOTO

The deadline for entries is May 10, 2016. One answer allowed per person, per issue. Please include your name and mailing address with your answer. Everyone who submits the correct location will go into a drawing. One person, randomly selected from all the correct entries, will win a prize. We reserve the right to publish the name, city and state of those entering. One winner per household allowed per year.

WIN A PRIZE!

Tell us the name of this attraction and the theme park you can find it in. To enter, e-mail your answer, along with your name and mailing address to mystery@attractionsmagazine.com.

Hint: This scary looking stairway is out of reach. This attraction wasn't yet open as of press time.



LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO ANSWER

Congratulations to Peggy Harris from The Woodlands, Texas. She recognized this as the stack of newspapers outside of Mr. Gold's pawnshop facade on Streets of America at Disney's Hollywood Studios.





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OUT OF THE LOOP

Theme Park and Attraction Worldwide Roundup

By Andy Guinigundo

RENDERING BY DISNEY



Disneyland Closes Big Thunder Ranch, Releases New 'Rivers' Artwork

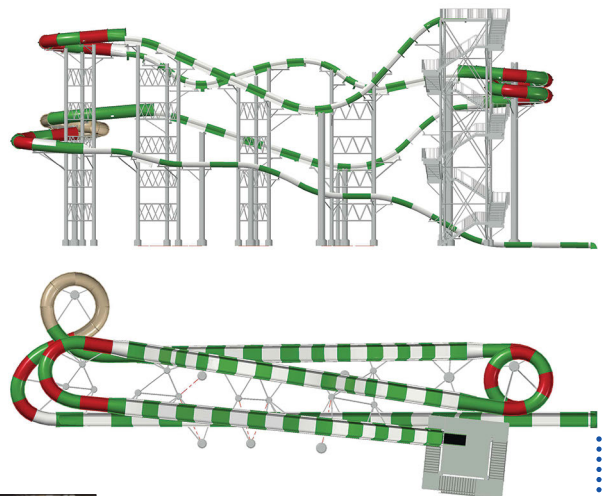
Disneyland, Anaheim, Calif. – In January, Disneyland's Big Thunder Ranch area permanently closed. The area that sat near the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad ride included a petting zoo, walk-through cabin and a barbecue restaurant. Opened in 1986, the area even housed a few turkeys that had received presidential pardons. Additionally, The Disneyland Railroad is temporarily closed for refurbishment. Guests will be able to get an up-close look at the trains in the station and talk to the engineers during the refurbishment. A new artist rendition of the completed Rivers of America area has been released showing a new riverbank and elevated trestle for the train. These closings are all in preparation of the upcoming 14-acre Star Wars-themed land whose groundbreaking will take place this year. Star Wars will occupy the Big Thunder Ranch area and several current backstage areas.

Holiday World To Add Elements to The Legend Coaster

Holiday World, Santa Claus, Ind. – As we enter 2016, Holiday World, the first theme park, will celebrate its 70th Anniversary. The park debuted its first and record-breaking steel coaster, Thunderbird, last year. As an encore, the park has been working all off-season to improve its trio of wooden coasters. The Raven received track work in the fall. The Voyage received new steel on the second and

third hill lift. Additionally, eight layers and 300 feet of track were replaced after the triple down. These changes should make for a bit smoother ride. The most substantial work will occur on the "middle child" coaster, The Legend. On this, its 10th anniversary, the park has consulted Great Coasters International to make some big changes that will result in more airtime, a smoother ride and faster speeds. Supports will be increased and eight layers of track will be replaced on the first hill. A new tunnel is being added toward the end of the ride. A new double down element after the double helix

promises more airtime. A double down is a drop followed in succession by another lower drop. Work is expected to be completed by opening day.



Schlitterbahn to Open Tallest Water Coaster

Schlitterbahn Waterpark, Galveston Island, Texas – Schlitterbahn has had its share of waterpark technology firsts and record-breaking over the years. Just last year, they opened the world's tallest waterslide, Verrückt, in Kansas City. This year they will debut the tallest watercoaster. Watercoasters are unique in that riders not only slide down water hills, but are also propelled up hills much like a dry coaster would. Massive, German for massive, will be in Galveston, the site of the most rides of any Schlitterbahn park. It will be the length of two and a half football fields, or 926 feet. It will have four water jet-propelled uphill sections. One

or two riders will sit in a double tube. How tall will it be? They haven't said yet, but the big reveal will be in the spring with the ride opening in time for the summer season.

Wizards World Soft Opens at Universal Hollywood

Universal Studios Hollywood, Universal City, Calif. – With the official opening date of April 7 still weeks away, muggles began to gain entrance to the West Coast Wizarding World of Harry Potter in mid February. Five years of construction are finally coming to a close. Aspiring wizards will be able to ride Universal Studios Hollywood's first outdoor roller coaster on the family coaster, Flight of the Hippogriff. Shops and restaurants familiar to Harry Potter fans have likewise opened including The Three Broomsticks, Hog's Head Pub, Ollivander's, Zonko's and others. West Coast guests have begun to partake of the wonderful sweet treat known as Butterbeer. The focal point is, of course, Hogwarts Castle and the premier ride is Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey. While these attractions are old news to the Orlando theme park goer, the West Coast crowd is understandably giddy!



New Transformers Attraction Coming to China

Beijing, China – In a lavish event at the Shangri-La Hotel Beijing that involved press, VIPs and an 11-foot tall Optimus Prime, it was announced that DMG Live and Hasbro, along with S2BN, will be creating a live Transformers show in China. The show will be housed in a 4,500-seat theater, probably in Beijing, although other



sites are being considered. Producer Michael Cohl stated, "Transformers Live will be a cross between an action-adventure spectacle, a theme park attraction and a theatrical show. Fans will experience intense action, beautiful visual moments, an emotionally engaging story, lots of humor and rousing music". Why China? The Transformers movies have been wildly popular in China. Transformers: Age of Extinction grossed up to \$320 million in China, eclipsing the North American total of \$245 million. No timeline was announced as to when the show may debut.

Dollywood's Lightning Rod is Revving Up

Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. – Dollywood has one of the shortest off seasons of any seasonal theme park. They have an award-winning Christmas event through the holidays and then close for

the coldest months, only to open up in time for the American spring break crowds around March. Attraction builders have to work early and quickly in order to get the rides open for the March timeframe. Indeed, lots of wood and track work were well under way last summer for Dollywood's upcoming roller coaster, Lightning Rod. This will be the world's first launching wooden coaster. It will have a 165-foot initial drop at 73 mph. Other groundbreaking features will include twin airtime summits, a 90 degree-plus banked breaking wave turn, a 90 degree-plus outside banked turn, and a non-inverting half loop, among other features. Coaster enthusiasts may point out that this is not a "traditional" wooden coaster, in that it uses "topper track" technology. It's expected to open in March.





LIGHTS, CAMERA, ATTRACTION!

You may have seen Disney's Tsum Tsum plush round toys at one of your local stores, and maybe you even own a few. You may be one of the many obsessed with these cute cuddly pillow-type dolls of all sizes, which are designed after popular Disney characters and spawned from a mobile game. But we bet you never thought of making a dress out of them, as Disney did at their D23 Expo last year.



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